THE SHAKERITE

Volume 95 // Issue 6

June 1, 2025

Inaugural Special Profile Edition • Reported and written by Journalism II and Sports Writing students

SHAKER IN PROFILE

THE SHAKERITE

May 27, 2025
Volume 95, Issue 5

A Note From the Newswroom

You are holding in your hands the evidence of only the second time in my 30-year career that I have set a course for the Land of Profiles, and the first time that evidence has ever appeared on newsprint.

Here is the editor's note Shakerite staff wrote to accompany the profiles published online at shakerite.com in 2018:

"This profile is part of a series we call Shaker Stories. In a novel activity 42 Journalism II students — two juniors, one sophomore and 39 freshmen — devoted the third quarter to researching, reporting, drafting, editing and revising profiles of Shaker students, teachers, coaches, residents and alumni. Shakerite editors and Journalism II students suggested people they considered noteworthy. Journalism II students chose their subjects and invited them to participate.

Subjects who accepted agreed to at least three, 20-minute interviews, suggested other sources to be interviewed, submitted photos — and endured dozens of follow-up questions. Journalism II students completed research as necessary to portray their subjects' subcultures, whether Irish dancing, competitive cube solving or editorial cartooning.

The Shakerite will publish the products of this unprecedented effort. We invite you to read, enjoy and share these profiles widely. We thank everyone who cooperated with this enormous effort. We also encourage you to suggest more people whose Shaker stories we should know."

The only significant differences that characterize this year's profile project are that for the first time, Sports Writing reporters participated. And, for the first time in my career, I had a colleague with whom to share the adventure. Hunter McGonnell, my English Department colleague, taught two sections of Sports Writing this year and worked very hard to help his students meet the publication requirements and deadline for this project, including replying to my frantic emails seeking photo credit and cutline information.

The obvious question, then, is, " What prompted me to pull the profile project out of storage?" I've been wondering that myself since January. I think there are three reasons. First, working with Mr. McGonnell prompted me to sift through my memories of what has been fun and interesting to teach in the past. Second, we are, thankfully, long enough distanced from the COVID-19 pandemic to safely and reasonably ask that reporters interview profile subjects in person, at length, repeatedly.

Third, when school began this year, my classes were full of students who looked me in the eye and who sustained conversations with me and with classmates because – you guessed it – they couldn't access their phones. You can't overestimate the importance of this fact.

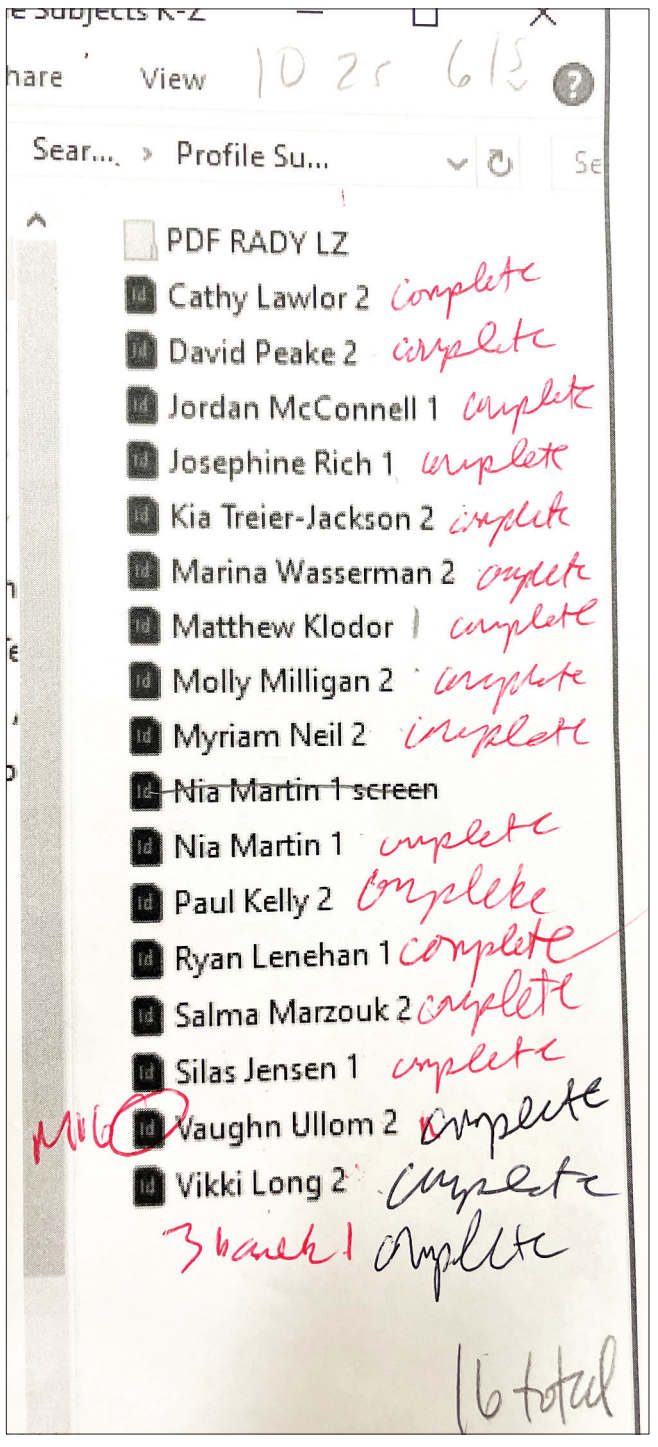
Whatever the reason, Hunter agreed to take on profiles and then agreed two months later that publishing them in a special print edition of The Shakerite would be a great idea. I want to thank him for his willing participation and support.

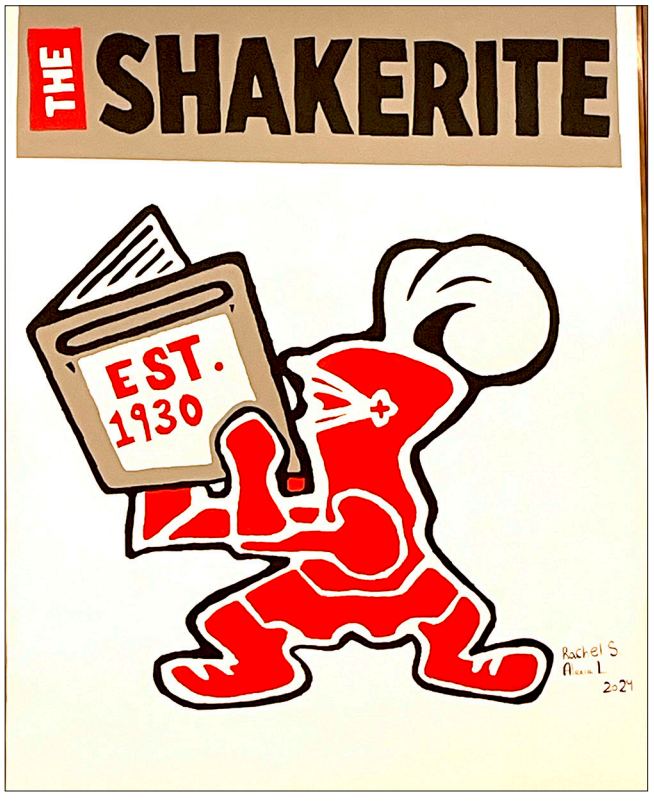
Thanks also to everyone who participated in one, or a dozen, interviews throughout the semester as students continued their reporting. And extra special thanks to Shakerite Design Managing Editor Alison Teeter for designing the cover and to Photo Editor Camryn Dozier for cheerfully taking photos of profile subjects for the print edition once her AP tests were over.

Sports Writing student Lila Cohen, a junior, was the chief editor of this endeavor; she read stories from all five participating classes, gave feedback and kept reporters moving toward the goal. Sports Writing student Claire Joyce, a junior, worked with Mr. McConnell's classes to ensure every profile subject's photos existed and were in the right place. Journalism II reporter Matthew Moore, a freshman, designed infographic templates for the pages and edited lots of photos so that they could be placed on pages. Students in all five classes read one another's profiles, made suggestions to improve them and offered plentiful moral support.

I hope you enjoy the 35 profiles included in this inaugural edition of what I hope will become a regular feature of Shakerite coverage. You will also be able to read these stories (some of which will apppear as extended versions) and additional profiles, photos and infographics at shakerite.com.

Natalie Sekicky





THE SHAKERITE

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@The.Shakerite
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January 17, 2025

Dear write your subject's name here (use courtesy titles for adults),

My name is write your name here. I am a reporter for The Shakerite, our high school news organization. I hope to write a profile about you for publication in the print or web edition of The Shakerite sometime during the fourth quarter of this school year. You were nominated by reporters and editors as a newsworthy subject for this profile because write reason here.

I am writing to invite you to participate in this profile. To do so, you would meet with me for three to five interviews during the third quarter. I estimate each interview would last 20 minutes. I would also observe you in your environment and interview friends, colleagues, family members, teammates or other people who know you well and who can offer anecdotes about your spirit, character or accomplishments. A photo editor or I would also take some pictures of you.

I am excited to help The Shakerite audience learn about you and write something about your subject's subculture activities here. I hope you can participate! If you have any questions, please reach me at write your phone number here if you are OK with sharing it [don't if your subject is a school employee], or contact my Journalism teacher, Natalie Sekicky, at sekicky_n@shaker.org. Please respond to this email, or reach me at my phone number to accept or decline this invitation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Write your name here
Journalism II reporter

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Andy Benincasa lines up against Willoughby South's defensive line Aug. 23, 2024 at Russell H. Rupp Field. The senior co-captain helped lead the Raiders to a 28-14 victory in their home-opener.

Michael Better

ANDY BENINCASA

Senior Athlete Leads in Every Venue — Turf, Ice or Grass

Andy Benincasa is the latest Raider to own Mow Brows, a lawn care service created and managed by students

TOMMY DOWNING AND LINCOLN GOLDSTEIN
Sports Writing Reporters

In the summer, Andy Benincasa spends the majority of days on turf. And a lot of it is real.

Along with his fellow captains and the rest of the SHHS football team, Benincasa practices from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the artificial turf at Russell H. Rupp field.

Unlike his teammates, when practice ends, Benincasa heads to a neighborhood lawn with some friends – to landscape it.

Benincasa, a senior at SHHS, is the latest owner of Mow Bros, a local landscaping company run by high school students.

Founded in 2021, Mow Bros was started by Shaker Heights student Will Welsh ('22). After Welsh graduated, he passed down the business to Jackson Fowler ('23), then to Colin Richard ('24), then to Benincasa.

Fowler was Benincasa's football teammate from 2021 to 2024 and introduced him to the business in 2023. Fowler ran the business at the time, but this development led to the position Benincasa holds today.

Benincasa said Mow Bros' goal is to better the community and support inexpensive lawn care.

The Mow Bros team has a group chat where they coordinate who will be working the jobs. "Mow Bros is a team job and we have to work together to keep it going," Benincasa said.

"The typical clients are young and old parents, usually people who live in my neighborhood," he said. "My role as the owner is to set up the jobs and coordinate who is working them."

"Mow Bros has around 35 clients," he said.

On top of running Mow Bros, Benincasa captains the football, hockey and lacrosse teams.

Assistant Athletic Director Marc Enie said that only Emily Lamb ('24) and Benincasa have been three-sport captains in the last two years.

Head of Sports Performance Joe Schlesinger said that Benincasa sets the standard for everyone else. "It's really impressive and rare to see a three-sport captain, " he said. "Outspoken. Leader. He's the program,"

"For him to be the captain of three sports is incredible and a huge accomplishment," said head hockey coach Matt Bartley, "but knowing him and how hard he works, I am not surprised."

Benincasa said that as captain, he tries to make sure teammates maintain a positive attitude. "I try to lead by example and be positive, and when I see someone being negative, I make sure to correct them," Benincasa said.

Freshman hockey player Isaac Luzar said Benincasa always maintains focus no matter what. "He makes sure to stay positive even in the worst of situations, and because of his attitude, we are able to come into the next game with a better mindset," Luzar said.

Head football coach Alex Nicholson said Benincasa's consistency is important to his

PLAYING THROUGH TO HONOR HIS FAMILY'S LESSONS

Eli Kestin

Benincasa tore his PCL and meniscus, and without realizing it, played through the hockey season this year. When lacrosse season came, an X-ray revealed the gravity of his injury.

He chose to continue the season and did not miss a game. "I didn't want to miss my last year to support my guys through the season, and my parents and brothers raised me to be tough," he said.

"I know if it were either of my brothers who got this injury, they would play through it, and they raised me the same."

success, "His ability to lead by example and do things consistently at a high level," Nicholson said. "His leadership, ability to pick up teammates, ability to create relationships, and the skill of helping to take off stress in high-pressure situations of panic or stress elevated him over other candidates."

Sophomore Colin Arth, who plays lacrosse and hockey, said Benincasa's business experience influenced his choice for captain. "I voted Andy as a hockey captain, not just because of his great leadership skills on and off the ice, but also because he runs Mow Bros, and a good CEO makes a good captain," Arth said.

Being a multi-sport athlete and running a business requires Benincasa to manage his time. "Balancing all of the sports I play and Mow Bros can be difficult, but focusing on what I have at hand helps me keep all my ducks in a row. And it's really all about time management," Benincasa said.

Sophomore teammate Sebby Juan said Benincasa leads even off the rink or field. "He is a great captain in ways beyond the ice. He would always drive me home when I asked because I'm not able to yet. He doesn't just do this for hockey, though; he drives me home from lacrosse practice too," Juan said.

Resnick said that Benincasa's positive approach helps the team. "Andy elevates us during practice. He makes sure that everyone gives high effort because of his effort," he said. Benincasa's effort helped him earn an all-Ohio honorable mention for hockey.

Benincasa said he tries to be the best captain he can be by "being with [my] guys and supporting them through the ups and downs, no matter the result."

He credits his success to his two older brothers, Don Carlo, who goes by D.C., and Max. "They were tough on me, but they always wanted to see me succeed. I would love watching them play sports because I always knew that would be me one day. I looked up to them more than anyone else," Benincasa said.

Max played football, hockey and was lacrosse team captain. He now plays lacrosse at Wittenberg University. D.C. played hockey and tennis. Benincasa's older sister, Susie, played field hockey at SHHS and now plays field hockey at Ohio Wesleyan University.

Bartley coached all of the Benincasa boys. "Andy has always been outgoing and social. That has really carried on to his leadership, and he is a vocal and well-liked captain," he said.

After Andy graduates, he will attend Syracuse University and major in finance. According to Benincasa, the long-term goal is to, "find a good job where I enjoy what I do every day."

Benincasa hopes to be in a leadership position in the future. "I like being in charge and having control over what happens in the company. I see myself in a managerial position in the future because I like being able to do what I think is best for the company," he said.

There is a future for Mow Bros, too. Benincasa plans on passing the business to juniors Hardy Welsh, Will Huff and Nate Landever. Hardy Welsh is the brother of Will Welsh, who started the business four years ago.

Despite holding so many leadership roles, he doesn't really want to be viewed as a leader.

Said Benincasa, "Think of me as just trying to be the best teammate I can be."

After summer football practices, Benincasa coordinates the work of Mow Bros student employees. Together, they serve about 35 clients. *Joey Moore*

> *"For him to be the captain of three sports is incredible and a huge accomplishment, but knowing him and how hard he works, I am not surprised.*
>
> Matt Bartley

Benincasa on the ice vs. rival Cleveland Heights. A three-sport captian, he follows in the leadership footsteps of his siblings, whom he credits for his toughness. *Matty Moore*

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BRITTANY BILLUPS

Senior Reggie Tyus, sophomore Zuri Inyang-Stewart and freshman Na'Jaiya Tyus, Sankofa members, work with adviser Brittany Billups in the large auditorium. Billups, an intervention specialist, advises Sankofa along with art teacher Keaf Holliday. She performed in Sankofa throughout high school and volunteered with the program throughout college. "She really has a good relationship with kids because of her enthusiasm and her youth," Holliday said.

Emma Barker

20 Years Later, Keeping the Sankofa Connection Alive

Active in 'all the things' since she was a student, intevention specialist Brittany Billups delivers life lessons to the next generation

EMMELINE MILLAR AND KARA EKEBERG
Journalism II Reporters

When Sankofa adviser Brittany Billups ('09) took a bow on stage after this year's performance, it wasn't the first time. She's been part of the Sankofa family since 2005.

Billups, an intervention specialist at the high school, continues to participate in Sankofa because she feels like she belongs. "When I was in school, I was in marching band, I was a cheerleader, I was in SGORR, I was in [MAC Sister] Scholars. I was in all the things, and I never felt like I was truly myself in any of those things until I was in Sankofa.

"It feels like family," she said.

Sankofa is a performance about Black history that features students singing, dancing, acting and reciting spoken-word poetry. According to Billups, Sean Xavier Allen, a former SHHS teacher, created Sankofa as an opener to a Black History Month assembly in 1997. In its initial form, the performance did not involve students. In 1999, students joined the production, and it has continued as a club since 2001.

Sankofa teaches people about aspects of Black history, some of which are not often discussed. "Every year, there are teachers and adults that say they learned something they didn't know. It can go farther back than the history classes we offer here can go," Billups said.

ORIGINS OF THE NAME SANKOFA AND THE SANKOFA BIRD

The name "Sankofa" was added to the show in 1999 by Sean Xavier Allen, a former SHHS teacher, Billups said. The first Black History Month performance was by teachers in 1997. In 1998, students joined.

The word 'Sankofa' comes from the African language Twi, or Akan. The word originated from The Akan tribe of Ghana, which is located along the Ivory Coast of Western Africa. The Tribe began when people started to migrate to Ghana from the 11th to the 18th century.

The word "Sankofa" translates roughly to "go back and get it." It originated from an Akan proverb that encourages learning from the past and applying that knowledge to the future. It implores people not to let history repeat itself.

The Sankofa bird that accompanies the word has a forward-facing belly. However, its head is turned around and bends down to its back. It holds an egg in its beak. This image symbolizes looking to the future, but using the past as a guide, and is often used to show the meaning of Sankofa. It also represents knowledge and wisdom gained from previous experiences. It appears in traditional Akan art such as sculptures and paintings.

Sankofa and the bird are also popular names and logos for many other things, including restaurants that serve African cuisine, books, movements, bookstores and boutiques.

She graduated in 2009 and went to Cuyahoga County Community College, where she earned an Associate of Arts Dance and Theater degree. She then attended Notre Dame College for a bachelor's in history of intelligence research and analysis, then earned a master's degree in business and entrepreneurship from Cleveland State University.

Originally, Billups went to school to be a spy. She said she was inspired by TV shows such as "Covert Affairs," a USA Network drama about a young CIA trainee, and also had family in the military. In addition, her dad was the Clevelad Police director of intelligence

"It was in my blood," she said.

During college, Billups, who also participated in Gristmill and Shakerite during high school, was a Cleveland Cavalier girl and worked with the Black Studies Department at Cleveland State University. She was also an administrative assistant for the Education Students Services Center and worked 40-hour weeks.

Yet, she maintained her commitment to Sankofa even when she entered college. During 2010-2013, she began volunteering, choreographing dances and helping with costuming. She is now co-adviser to Sankofa.

She first worked at the middle school as a paraprofessional and a cheer coach, and when a teacher notified her of the high school intervention specialist role, Billups made the move. In her role as an intervention specialist, co-teaches geometry and provides extra sup-

port in the classroom for students who need it.

Much like when she was a super-active high-school student, Billups is also the bowling coach, cheerleading coach and gymnastics coach and manages her own business.

Her business focuses on coaching fitness and teaching entrepreneurial mindsets and positive lifestyles. She's worked on it for around five years, she said, created her first website in 2023 and launched her app earlier this year. She said entrepreneurship is common in her family and that she has helped her dad with several businesses that he owns. She has helped open retail stores and restaurants. "I've always been into business," she said.

Billups also loves dance, and grew up dancing with her cousins and in church. Her cousins were members of the Cavs Dance Team before she became one in 2010, and they took her to her Cavalier Girl audition. She also did gymnastics growing up and Dance Club in high school."Dance is an outlet, and it's expressive, and there's no wrong way to do it," she said.

Today, Billups leads the Sankofa dance workshops, where students learn the dance they will perform for the audition. "Dance is like a huge passion of my life," she said.

Each Sankofa season, students begin working on the theme of the performance, which is woven through the script. After auditions, students begin rehearsing the songs and scenes and begin promotion and production.

Auditions usually take a week from early to mid-September. There is one day for both acting and singing, two days for dance workshops, a third day for the dance tryouts, and callbacks for acting and singing if needed.

This year, the show was titled "Our Ancestors' Wildest Dreams," which showed how ancestors fought for the rights of future generations. In her co-adviser role, Billups aided Sankofa members in singing and theatrics, while also coaching the dance members.

She said watching the show after starting from nothing every year is emotional. "Seeing the final product is the most proud moment for me," she said.

Junior Sharon Orisadipe participated in singing and acting in the Sankofa performances this year. "I admire how much time [Billups] puts into Sankofa," she said. "She ran or had a hand in almost everything this year, and without her, I'm sure things would've been way different."

Since 2006, art teacher Keaf Holliday has worked with Billups while advising Sankofa.

"She wants the students to have an outlet for Black history; she wants the students to have an outlet to show their skill sets," he said.

Billups said Sankofa is an environment for kids to discover their authentic identities. "I feel like it's a place for students to find who they want to be, not who they're supposed to be according to society," she said.

Holliday said Billups connects with students. "She really has a good relationship with kids because of her enthusiasm and her youth," he said.

"If students need to talk," she said, "then I make space for them to talk." Orisadipe said Billups recognizes when students need a moment.

"There was a time everyone was really stressed out, so she made us do this calming circle, and it was really nice," she said.

Brittany Billups' lifelong love of dance led her to become a Cleveland Cavalier girl in 2010, when this photo was taken. She grew up dancing with her cousins, who joined the Cavs Dance Team first and took her to her audition. *Courtesy of Brittany Billups*

> *Once you get that interaction with Coach B, and you end up doing Sankofa, or not Sankofa, but interacting with her, the lessons she helps you through end up basically helping you through life.*
>
> Jeremiah Caver

Jeremiah Caver, a paraprofessional at the high school and the technical director of Sankofa, said Billups builds up students to help them later in life. "I think the impact is one that is long-lasting and helps build the character of the students that cross her path," he said.

"She is really funny and cool to be around, especially during private conversations. She's also pretty understanding, and while she can seem a little scary, once you get to know her, she's really amazing," Orisadipe said.

"Once you get that interaction with Coach B, and you end up doing Sankofa, or not Sankofa, but interacting with her, the lessons she helps you through end up basically helping you through life," Caver said.

Senior Sankofa participant Reginald Tyus shared one lesson he learned. "She just showed me how to not care what people think," he said.

Pursuing your passions is important, Billups said. "You'll always regret not doing the thing that your heart told you to do," she said.

Holliday said he plans to retire from his position next year, after the Sankofa performances, and feels good about handing the reins to Billups because of her consistent work in and for the program.

Said Holliday, "Passing the torch is gonna be really easy."

BILLUPS TAKES ON TECHNIQUE AND SOCIAL NORMS AS BOWLING COACH

Kara Ekeberg

TRINITY LITTLEJOHN
Sports Writing Reporter

Brittany Billups took on the role of women's bowling team coach three years ago.

"I asked a few questions about it," she said, "and then I decided to just do it."

High school bowling has grown in Ohio since the early 2000s. The Bowling Proprietors Association of Ohio first sponsored a high school team during the 2000-2001 school year. The Ohio High School Athletic Association added bowling to its list of official sports for the 2006-07 year, so bowlers now compete for a state title.

Billups ('09) didn't have the chance to bowl for the Raiders, and said she didn't bowl competitively otherwise as a kid. "I wasn't in a youth league growing up," she said. "I bowl with my family from time to time."

She jumped into the position anyway.

Billups said that she uses an app called Onform to help Raider bowlers improve. She records students bowling. The app then analyzes their technique and form. It provides instant feedback. "We can send that video to the athletes so they can study it and adjust for the next time," Billups said.

Bowling has long been associated in popular culture with white, blue-collar communities, including Parma, which in the mid 20th century is said to have had more bowling alleys than any other Cleveland-area city. As a coach, Billups notices imbalanced representation at bowling matches.

"I believe that myself, Coach [Vikki] Long and the Cleveland Heights coach are the only three black, female coaches. And there's something upwards of 46 teams at these matches," she said. "Most of the teams are either predominantly black or predominantly white, with a few sprinkles throughout," she said.

In 1959, George Branham III became the first Black man to win the PBA Championship. His dad got him into bowling when Branham was 6 years old. Their family then moved a few years later to California to improve Branham's competition, and he eventually joined the PBA tour and earned a top 20 finish before becoming the first Black bowler to win a major PBA title.

Today, Black bowlers are still rare in the pros.

"If you look at the PBA tour, nobody can tell me one recognizable black PBA bowler," said Corey Littlejohn, a Black Shaker Heights resident and bowler. He recently won the Monday Men's Early bowling tournament at RollHouse Entertainment in Parma.

Like Branham, Littlejohn got his start from his family. "The earliest age I can remember bowling was like 5 or 6," he said. "I started off learning by my dad teaching me and coaching me around the age of 12, and I had a couple of other coaches."

Littlejohn said he faced some challenging expectations as he continued to bowl. "Earlier, when I started doing this, there was a negative response because it was not seen as something Black people did," he said. "To be black and to be bowling was kind of taboo."

Billups said Raider bowlers defy that stereotype. "Shaker is one of the most diverse teams. We have Indian students and Black students, white students, Asian students."

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CORNELL BEARD

Senior Cornell Beard cruises through the end zone, followed by senior safety/wide receiver Kamren Jackson, after scoring a second-quarter touchdown on an eight-yard run against the Cleveland Heights High School Tigers Oct. 26, 2024. The host Tigers won, 54-35, but not before Beard recorded two rushing touchdowns during the last game of his high school football career. He plans to continue his career at Saginaw Valley State University.

Joseph Nagy

Runningback Rolls Over Foes en Route to College Bid

CHARLIE HOWELL AND JACOB DICKAS
Sports Writing Reporter

Soaking it all in, Cornell Beard is about to take the next step in his football career.

Surrounded by family and friends, he signs his letter of intent and officially becomes a future Saginaw Valley State Cardinal. The crowd begins to cheer as the next chapter of his life begins.

Characterized by his tough, bruising style of play, Beard has consistently recorded exceptional stats throughout his years as a Raider football player.

Beard earned varsity playing time as a sophomore. Now, at the end of his high school career, Beard has recorded 2,891 total rushing yards, averaging 6.3 yards per carry, and 42 total touchdowns.

"He's a workhorse when he runs the ball," head football coach Alex Nicholson said. "His contact balance and vision is elite."

Coaches have compared Beard's aggressive running style to backs such as Cam Skattebo of the New York Giants and David Montgomery of the Detroit Lions. When Beard gets the rock, he's a hard player to bring down. "It's tough to tackle him," Nicholson said.

One of Beard's memorable moments occured at Cleveland Heights on Oct. 31. "He threw Jayquan Stubbs," Nicholson said. The 6-foot-6, 265-pound Stubbs is a three-star defensive lineman who recently signed to play for the University of Minnesota.

Not many players have achieved that kind of success against Stubbs.

Beard points to his freshman year as the foundation for his current success. "All I wanted to do was work," Beard said. "I had to adapt to what was coming and I had to get prepared for what I had ahead."

> "He's a workhorse when he runs the ball. His contact balance and vision are elite."
>
> Alex Nicholson

Both Beard and Nicholson acknowledge his work ethic. Nicholson also said that Beard's confidence and leadership ability helped him flourish in high school."Everything was in his confidence," Nicholson said. "At first we knew he was good, and he really started to progress when he became confident in himself."

Nicholson said Beard's confidence began to show itself ahead of the Raiders game against Mentor in 2023. Prior to the game, Mentor High School Football's head coach, Matt Gray referred to Beard as, "the best running back in the conference." This statement fueled Beard, who scored three touchdowns in that game.

Beard's confidence began to climb throughout his junior year. Nicholson recalls a 93-yard run with 5:45 left in the third quarter that helped defeat Solon 53-27 in 2023. "His run was huge," he said. "We had not beaten Solon in years before that." In that same game, Beard posted a statline of five touchdowns.

Another key to Beard's success has been balancing football and school responsibilities. "I keep a routine of schoolwork and football during the season. I get my work done and get to sleep on time," Beard said. In order to stay focused during the week, Beard only listens to music on gameday. "You have to stay focused and not get distracted at school," Beard said.

When preparing fore a game, Beard focuses on mobility and combines stretches and drills that he learned from football, wrestling and track. Beard said these activities help him get loose and make him a more explosive runner.

When college programs came calling, Beard visited large and historic programs such as Penn State and Virginia Tech. But he decided to sign with Saginaw Valley State, located in eastern Michigan.

SVSU is a Division II school competing in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. This past season, SVSU went 7-4 with the third best offense in the GLIAC.

Beard said that he felt right at home when stepping foot on the campus. "When I took a visit down to Saginaw, it was a cool campus, and the coach really embraced me," he said.

He said that Division I schools did not really sit well with him. "Sometimes D1 energy doesn't seem authentic, but Saginaw Valley's coach's love was genuine," Beard said.

Beard intends to make it to the National Football League. The path will be difficult, but Beard said he is not worried about it. He is calm and confident that everything will work out in the long run, even if it is not football related.

"I focus on what God has for me," he said.

He's a leader on and off the field among friends. "In practice, he's very loud. He won't sugarcoat anything. He always talks about what we need to work on," his longtime best friend Shaun Atkins said.

"He always comes up with good ideas to get us out of the house," he said.

Success aside, Beard also strives to avoid complacency.

He said, "I'm humble, and there is always work to be done."

MICHAEL BETTER

Michael Better skates up the ice as Shaker's varsity captains are called before the Senior Day game versus Benedictine High School at Thornton Park rink. Better was honored for his four years as a member of the hockey team. He and the team would lose, 6-4, following the senior day observance. Before the game, Better took photos with his family members. He said he loved his time playing for the Shaker Red Raiders the last four years, and that his favorite memory was playing at First Energy Stadium his sophomore year. Better said he'll miss the hockey family, and he was incredibly blessed to be a part of it. When not playing a sport, Better can be found at every kind of sporting event, taking photos for his business, thebetterpics.

Eli Kestin

Senior's Gift of Photography Began as a Helpful Act

ANDREW MULLEN AND ELI KESTIN
Sports Writing Reporters

Michael Better, varsity hockey goalie, played in a heartbreaking 3-2 loss to Shaker Heights' biggest hockey rival, University School.

The February game was one of the senior's best performances of the year; he saved 37 out of 40 shots on net, a 92.5 percent save rate. It was also his last ever game as a member of a competitive hockey team.

"I was obviously very emotional," Better said.

His future in hockey may continue, however, behind a camera. Better, who operates a professional photography service, thebetterpics, is gaining access to sports events in high school and beyond.

Better's history with photography began at his cousin's wedding in 2014. His aunt, the designated photographer for their family, wanted to be able to focus on her daughter's wedding, and Better, recognizing her conflict, asked if he could help her.

"How about I take photos for the wedding?" Better said.

His aunt supported the idea, and after the wedding, as payment, his aunt gave him the camera he used.

Better used it sparingly after that day, but he rediscovered his passion during his freshman year.

"Mike started to enjoy photography in his freshman year after taking a photo class," Better's lifelong friend Kellen Young said. As Better learned more about photography and developed his interest, he decided to make a business out of it and started it during his junior year.

> *"I always want to keep sports in my life with photography, and hopefully get to the next level after that.*
>
> Michael Better

Better's photography business, which goes by thebetterpics on his social media pages, became successful following the 2024 lacrosse season.

"The Chagrin vs. Shaker snow game was where it started getting real," Better said.

His clients, typically high school sports teams, contact and pay him to drive out to the location of their games and take pictures or videos.

Prices vary, but he generally charges $5 per photo.

Better now shoots a variety of sporting events, some more exclusive than others. To gain access, he began working with media organizations. "This senior year for football season, NextGenerationSportsMedia got close with me and got in contact to cover lots of sports," he said.

On his Instagram are examples of his work shooting football, hockey, baseball, track, ice skating, soccer, lacrosse, basketball, wrestling and field hockey, with a few posts of prom shots thrown in.

Better's schedule is busy, and hockey season makes it even busier.

"The schedule is pretty tight, but most of the practices are after school, and photography is at night.

"Sometimes they do overlap, and of course I try to be home for the family as much as possible," Better said.

His photo routine is extensive. After shooting, he edits images using Adobe Bridge to organize his files of photos, and Light Room Classic, another Adobe platform, to "denoise and use resolution settings to help enhance the photos, depending on what I need." Better said.

The editing process can take between five to seven hours to complete. Better said it's worth it.

"I want to make sure what I produce is the best I can produce, which, you know, is time-consuming," he said.

Teammates who see him every day get to see how Better works.

"After the Bowling Green tournament, he spent an extra hour and 30 minutes and took his camera, and started taking photos for the US game," Better's teammate Cameron Mayhugh said.

The next step for Better is gaining an internship with a professional sports team.

He has already shadowed a photographer for the Cleveland Guardians, shooting photos on the field, in the dugout and in the pressbox. Better hopes the Cleveland Browns will also give him a chance.

"I love shooting football, it's just so much fun," Better said.

Better plans to attend the Farmer School of Business at Miami University. He said he wants to keep up with his photography career after high school.

"I would love to keep it going," he said. "I always want to keep sports in my life with photography, and hopefully get to the next level after that."

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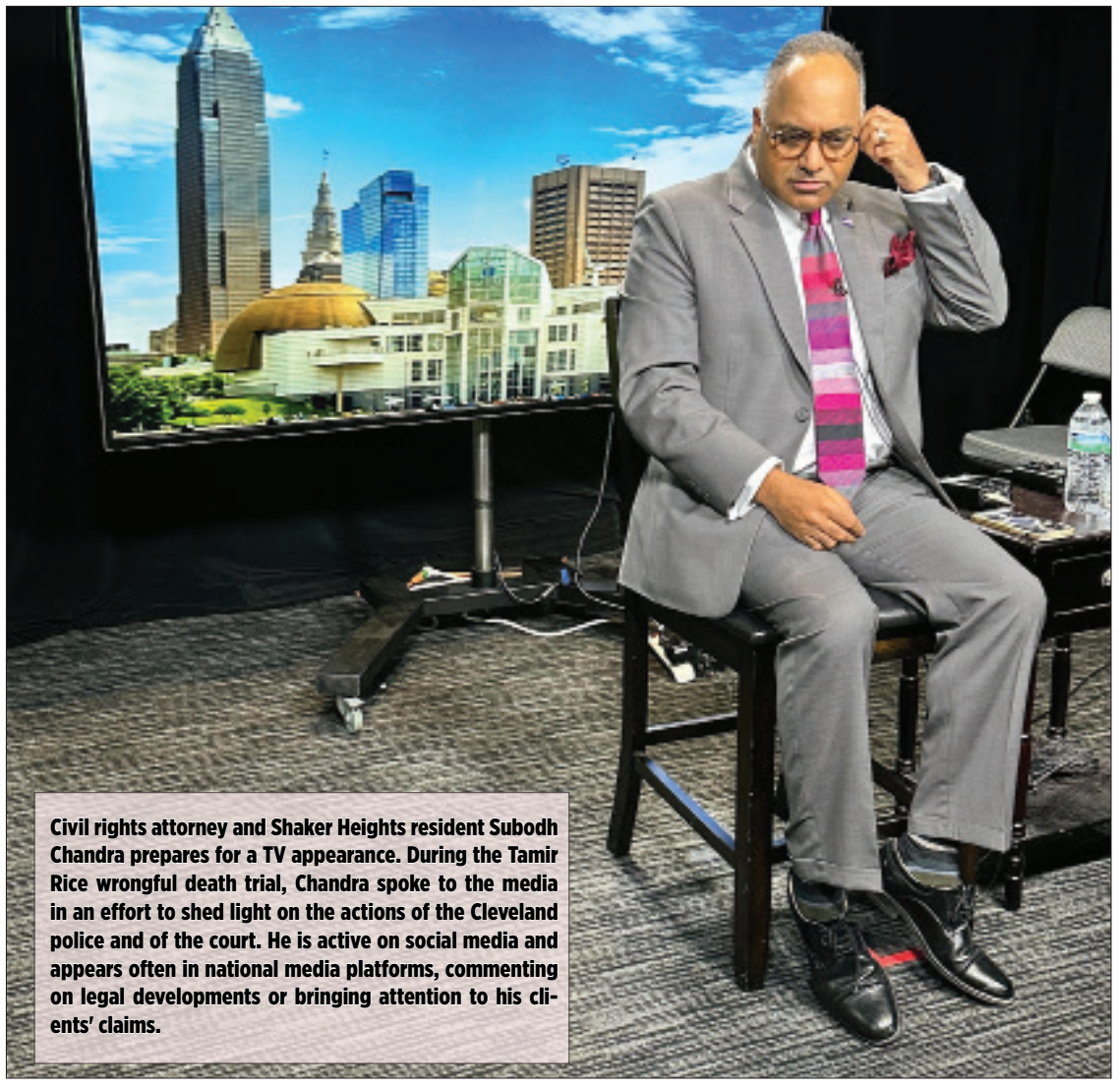
SUBODH CHANDRA



Civil rights attorney and Shaker Heights resident Subodh Chandra prepares for a TV appearance. During the Tamir Rice wrongful death trial, Chandra spoke to the media in an effort to shed light on the actions of the Cleveland police and of the court. He is active on social media and appears often in national media platforms, commenting on legal developments or bringing attention to his clients' claims.

Courtesy of Subodh Chandra

Fighting Systemic Injustice by Fighting for Individuals

Civil rights, voting rights and speech rights occupy much of the attorney's work as threats to U.S. democracy increase

LUCAS TCHEUREKDJIAN AND EDITH GRISSOM
Journalism II Reporters

In Cleveland, civil rights attorney Subodh Chandra has become a prominent figure in representing individuals and communities seeking redress in such matters. In court, Chandra has argued cases about police accountability, voting rights, free speech and workplace discrimination.

Chandra, a Shaker resident and parent of three SHHS graduates, is the founding and managing partner of The Chandra Law Firm LLC, which is based in downtown Cleveland. Born and raised in Norman, Oklahoma, after his parents immigrated from India, Chandra's early life experiences shaped his commitment to civil rights law.

"I experienced a fair amount of racial or national origin discrimination as a child in school," Chandra said.

Some of this discrimination emerged from misconceptions about his identity. "During the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979, I remember one episode where my parents were at our favorite local pizza place, and a man confronted my father," Chandra said.

The Iranian Hostage Crisis involved the seizure of 66 American diplomats and citizens in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran by Iranian students in November 1979, leading to protracted diplomatic tensions between the two nations. Fifty-two of the hostages were held until January 1980. Eight U.S. servicemen died in a failed rescue effort. U.S. TV newscasts displayed a running tally of days captive.

Later, during the first Gulf War, Chandra said, someone pulled a gun on his younger brother while he was in high school. This war erupted in 1990 following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, involving a coalition of forces led by the United States responding to the aggression.

In both cases, people in Norman assumed that because Chandra was of Indian descent, he was connected to events that involved people from the middle east.

After graduating from Stanford University, Chandra earned a law degree from Yale Law School.

His legal career spans both the public and private sectors. Early in his professional career, he served as the director of law for the city of Cleveland, where he managed a team of attorneys handling municipal legal matters.

In 2014, Chandra drew national media attention when he represented the family of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old Black boy who was shot and killed by two white Cleveland police officers, Timothy Loehmann and Frank Garmback. Loehmann shot Rice, who had been playing with a toy gun, within seconds of exiting the police car.

The officers were not criminally charged, sparking national outrage and discussion about police accountability.

Rice's family filed a lawsuit that claimed that the officers violated his constitutional rights by acting recklessly and using excessive force.

HOW CLEVELAND POLICE EMPLOYED EXCESSIVE FORCE

Tamir Rice was a 12-year-old boy shot and killed by two Cleveland police officers on Nov. 22, 2014.

The officers were responding to a 911 call about someone with a gun near the Cudell Recreation Center. The caller noted the person was "probably a juvenile" and the gun was "probably fake." However, this information was not relayed to the responding officers.

During the call, the dispatcher also asked three times whether the individual was Black or white. When the officers arrived, they drove their cruiser over the grass, directly up to the gazebo where Rice was playing. Within seconds, one officer shot Rice without issuing a warning.

The gun in his possession was later identified as a toy pellet gun.

Following the shooting, officers tackled and handcuffed Rice's 14-year-old sister as she tried to reach him. His mother, who arrived shortly afterward, was threatened with arrest if she did not calm down. Rice was taken to the hospital and died the next day from gunshot wounds to the torso.

In 2015, a grand jury declined to indict the officers involved, citing insufficient evidence. The decision drew national attention and renewed debate over police use of force. In 2016, the City of Cleveland settled a federal wrongful death lawsuit filed by the Rice family by Subodh Chandra for $6 million.

Two years later, in 2016, the city of Cleveland settled the lawsuit, paying the Rice family $6 million. Loehmann was fired, but he later found employment with other police agencies, where he eventually resigned.

While making the case for Rice's family in court, Chandra engaged with the media outside of court to advocate for justice. "It became apparent early in my representation of Tamir Rice that we were not getting a fair shake by the elected county prosecutor and his assistant prosecutors," Chandra said. For example, the police officers' statements were not cross-examined.

"But what I could do is make sure the world knew what actually happened and how they were treated unfairly, in the hope that it would be a deterrent to future misconduct," Chandra said.

At the next election, three months later, the prosecutor that had handled the case lost his re-election bid in the Democratic primary.

Through cases such as Rice's, Chandra addressed what he describes as disparities within the U.S. justice system. "There are two systems of justice, you know," he said. "There is supposed to be one system of justice in which everyone is treated the same, it just doesn't work that way in reality."

"Equal justice under law is merely aspirational, but not a reality."

In addition to police-related cases, Chandra has handled legal matters connected to voting access and election law. He has challenged measures he and his clients argue restrict access to the ballot. These cases often involve constitutional claims and center on the interpretation and application of federal and state laws about voting rights.

Chandra has also focused on issues involving the First Amendment, including cases that address the rights of individuals to express views in public forums or workplaces. These cases often involve suing the government when plaintiffs assert their speech rights have been violated. "The First Amendment is the source, it is the wellspring of all of our other rights," he said. "Without free speech, we simply cannot be considered the land of the free."

Chandra often works alongside civil rights and public interest organizations, blending his legal practice with broader advocacy efforts. While many of these groups concentrate on driving systemic reform, he tackles injustice through individual cases that can lead to wider impact. His work has included partnerships and joint initiatives that address legal challenges both locally and across the country.

"We are witnessing the destruction of democracy before our very eyes," Chandra said, pointing to incidents such as the violent Capitol attack, where individuals who attacked police officers were later pardoned. "The former governor of Illinois, caught on tape asking for bribes in return for official acts, is yet another example," Chandra said.

In response, he has encouraged increased civic engagement and public awareness. He regularly speaks at forums and public events focused on democratic institutions, legal protections and civil liberties.

Chandra also advocates for diversity, equity and inclusion, especially in the face of current political challenges.

The Trump administration and GOP lawmakers have worked to eliminate DEI programs in the federal government, with legislation such as the Dismantle DEI Act and the FAIR Act. New executive orders have ended DEI initiatives, while Republican bills aim to cut related funding and offices.

Chandra grew up in Norman, Oklahoma, the son of Indian immigrant parents. He encountered racism based on mistaken assumptions that his family was from an Arab country. *Courtesy of Subodh Chandra*

> *"There is supposed to be one system of justice in which everyone is treated the same, it just doesn't work that way in reality. Equal justice under law is merely aspirational and not reality.*
>
> Subodh Chandra

In response, Chandra continues to advocate for policies and legal frameworks that support these values. "Considering the hard-fought gains, it's incomprehensible to me that anyone would try to politicize these efforts," Chandra said.

He noted that even small victories highlight the role advocacy plays in supporting individuals and communities. In one case involving retaliation, a client's child told him, "You gave me my dad back," reflecting the personal impact of his work.

"They got to drink some measure from the cup of justice," he said. "That's when you realize you can help facilitate good results for people."

This fight for justice is deeply rooted in both his professional and personal life. "My family is central to everything," he said, sharing that his marriage to a fellow civil rights lawyer stems from their shared values and dedication to public service.

Their children have been raised with a strong sense of history and purpose, learning about the Civil Rights Movement and the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. from a young age, he said. "The values that we try to live" are more than ideals — they are a way of life for the Chandra family.

Chandra's day-to-day work, however, can be a significant challenge. "Every day is hectic," he said. "You might start off with a plan, and you're lucky if you get only one or two of those things done."

Court-imposed deadlines, new case developments, and incoming legal matters often reshape the course of a day, making unpredictability a constant feature of his work.

Chandra describes the daily tasks of a civil rights lawyer as largely centered on research, writing and managing deadlines, rather than frequent courtroom appearances. "The average person might picture a lawyer standing up in court and arguing for what's right," he said. "But in reality, the bulk of each day is spent battling hundreds of emails, text messages, and phone calls."

With the increased use of technology, many court proceedings now happen by phone or video conference. "It's mostly legal research, legal drafting, editing, and filing arguments that the judges rarely hear," Chandra said.

The demands of lawsuits often make work-life balance a significant challenge. "There are midnight filing deadlines in federal court. You're editing down to the wire to give the court and your client your best work," Chandra said.

His work requires constant availability, often outside regular business hours. "Some clients only have time to talk to you in the evenings," he said, adding that the intensity of his work makes it hard to spend as much time with family as he'd like.

Advocating for individual plaintiffs can be especially challenging when their cases are seen as less significant than large-scale litigation. "Some judges may view a case as unimportant because it's just one person," he said, referencing civil rights claims involving issues such as retaliation or discrimination.

Chandra also emphasizes the critical role of legal writing and listening in his work. He describes legal writing as a discipline that demands clarity and precision, where "the actual facts should tell your story."

Listening, he says, is equally vital, especially in depositions and trial preparation. He recalled using an AI tool to summarize a lengthy case, which helped him hear it in a new way. "If you have the capacity to really listen, you will develop the case and see things you would never have been able to see," he said.

Despite his demanding career, Chandra has developed a deep passion for the performing arts. "I'd love to be involved in community theater. You know, I'm a thespian trapped in a lawyer's body. And a singer," he said with a smile.

However, he acknowledged that the demands of his legal career leave little room for such endeavors.

"It's going to be a while before I have time to do this," he said. "Probably won't have a lot of time to do that as long as I'm working full time in this profession."

Said Chandra,"Day in and day out, my job is to shine a light on injustices."

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NIA CHAPPELL

During fifth-period Global Studies class May 23 in Room 221, Intervention Specialist Nia Chappell works along with social studies teacher Madeline Short to help students highlight key notes about climate change.

Nyla Jamison

Shaker Alumna Returns to Share Her Gifts With Others

After 20 years working with preschool students, Nia Chappell decided high school was the next challenge

NYLA JAMISON
Journalism II Reporter

Intervention specialist Nia Chappell never stops learning.

Chappell ('95), like so many alumni, returned to the high school to help students be better. Her path back to the high school, however, was unique.

Chappell has followed both of her parents' job paths. She took after her dad, first becoming a postal worker for eight years. Eventually, she left that job and followed the steps of her mother, who was a health education teacher at the time. Her mom worked at John F. Kennedy High School in Cleveland for more than 40 years and later retired as an athletic director.

Chappell said her mom's teachings influenced her. By making a change in her career path, she was "abiding by what my mother instilled in me," she said.

Before becoming an intervention specialist, Chappell taught preschool for 20 years and owned an in-home childcare business. She worked at the Ministrial Daycare Association and Centers for Family and Children located in the Cleveland area and was an associate teacher at the Early Childhood Enrichment Center in Shaker Heights.

While she worked at ECEC, she said, she helped her students set a Guinness World Record for the largest ever vocabulary lesson.

The lesson occurred in 2014, when 150 Cleveland Public Schools preschool students went to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. In small groups, they read the book "Mr. Tiger Goes Wild" by Peter Brown. Other preschool classes around the country also participated. Judges observed five sites, including Cleveland, and ruled that the 1,031 participating students, ages 3-4, at those sites had set a first-time record.

"My experience was awesome," Chappell said. "I met a lot of families and little kiddos."

But, after 20 years of teaching preschool, Chappell wanted to experience something new. "I wanted to try secondary education over early childhood," she said.

Her mother had told her if she were to become a teacher, she should consider special education because she would always have a job; there is always a need for special education teachers.

Research suggests that teaching can run in families. Studies show that children of teachers are more likely to become teachers themselves. Some research suggests a particularly strong influence from mothers who are teachers, especially among daughters.

Chappell had already earned an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education in 2006. In 2015, she earned a bachelor's degree in special education and elementary education. In 2018, she became a paraprofessional at the high school.

In 2020, she earned her license as an intervention specialist.

Congress passed the Individuals with Dis-

THE MOM-DAUGHTER TEACHING CONNECTION IS REAL

Daughters who have exposure to their mother's profession; inherited traits; and role modeling play a role in influencing them to become teachers.

A 2019 study published by the Brookings Institution looked at people who graduated from high school in the 1970s and 1980s and their career choices. Researchers found that children of teachers were 110 percent more likely to become teachers than childen who did not have a teacher parent and that 44 percent of U.S. teachers were children of teachers.

The study also held that this effect was more likely among daughters than among sons of teachers. They may witness their mom's daily interactions with students and see their impact, which may create a positive perception of the profession and develop a career path.

Genetics also play a role in passing down compassionate and nurturing traits and thus increase the chances that someone may pursue careers that rely on those traits.

Daughters may receive support, encouragement and guidance from teacher mothers when considering teaching careers. They may accompany their mothers to school events and gain a sense being part of a school community. Such mother-daughter experiences are also more likely because women far outnumber men in the U.S. teaching population.

abilities Education Act in 1975. IDEA ensures that students with disabilities are educated in public schools and gives parents and children rights to special education services. Intervention specialists are special education teachers who help students who have learning, emotional or physical disabilities to succeed in academics and learn social and life skills.

They teach both students who are struggling to learn and those who have formal plans for services required by the IDEA, usually in co-taught classes, where they plan and prepare interventions collaboratively.

Chappell co-teaches with Global Studies teacher Madeline Short during fifth period this year.

She doesn't just support particular students when co-teaching the class; she focuses on every student. She uses her well-known phrases, such as "Kiss your brain," to compliment a student's smarts, and says, "I hear the bell," when Short strikes a bell with metal stick to gain attention for the next task.

As an intervention specialist, Chappell said she sometimes faces difficulties gaining trust with her students because they do not know her individually. When she gains their trust, she meets with her students to help them master their academic goals and teaches her students individual strategies to be great.

Short said she loves working with her. "She brings a lot of energy and enthusiasm," she said. Their fifth-period class comprises 25 students in Room 221, a tiny classroom. Short said that when Chappell is in the room, there's a smoother flow. When students have questions and need support to work on their assignments, Short can't always get to everybody in time, so she relies on her to reach students.

Chappell also works after school and on the weekends as a direct support professional, helping older adults with physical disabilities at their homes.

This role can include emotional support, assistance with daily living activities and encouragement for self-help. In this role, Chappell helps individuals develop skills to live as independently as possible. With proper training, such professionals may help clients take their medications. In order to qualify for this job, Chappell had to complete MEDPass training, first aid and CPR classes, and crisis prevention training.

Chappell said she usually works on Sundays for 16 hours and Mondays and Tuesdays from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. and picks up other shifts occasionally. Within her shift, she cooks, bathes clients if needed, does laundry, and gives them medications. She said she is there to help with their daily living.

Outside of the classroom, Chappell and Short talk in the hallways. Short visits her in her office and gives her a heads-up by text to let her know about updates for the upcoming class. Short said Chappell is a kind person who always knows how to lift others up.

"She cares for everyone she meets," Short said. "Someone who knows and understands our students is so valuable. Ms. Chappell's presence is important in this school. It's very needed."

Intervention specialist Tana Thompson, co-chair of the Exceptional Children's Department, met Chappell when she started working at the high school as a paraprofessional. When she was transitioning from paraprofessional to intervention specialist, Thompson was her mentor for a year. She said that Chappell has "a desire to learn and grow in her profession."

Intervention Specialist Nia Chappell graduated from SHHS in 1995. She returned to the school after two decades of teaching early childhood students. *Nyla Jamison*

> *"I don't think that Ms. Chappell understands what a gift she is to the world.*
>
> Madeline Short

Thompson said that Chappell has an amazing relationship with her students and that she can lighten up the mood and make tense situations more comfortable. "She is a light," Thompson said.

Transition Coordinator Kimberly Roberts assists intervention specialists with students' Individualized Education Plans, in particular the areas covering life after high school. Previously, she taught in the Extended Standards Classrooms — resource rooms for students with special needs.

Roberts created and managed a student coffee cart business, and Chappell was her number one customer.

"She is one of the most bubbly personalities that I have ever met," Roberts said.

Short said Chappell is joy embodied and a fun person to be around. "I don't think that Ms. Chappell understands what a gift she is to the world," she said.

Chappell said she has never thought to stop putting effort into things she's passionate about. She faces ups and downs, but she always remembers "every day is a learning process." She doesn't believe in her job being hard or stressful. "If you love what you do, it shouldn't be hard," she said.

She also doesn't believe that weaknesses are a bad thing. "It's an area to strengthen," she said.

Some students may grow close to their teachers, viewing them as family figures, especially when teachers go beyond their role as educators and provide emotional support and guidance. Senior Meikhi Hickman said that he sees Chappell as one of his aunts because she is on him about completing his school work. She checks on his progress and has made him strive to work harder.

"She stayed on me, and it made me want to do it," Hickman said.

"I've always known I was fit to be a teacher," Chappell said. How did she know? "Me being kind at all times, using my empathy, being sympathetic, and keeping a smile on my face," she said.

When Chappell isn't in fifth-period Global Studies class, students ask, "Where is Ms. Chappell?"

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JACIRE EADDY

In Sports and in Class, Making the Most of a Sudden Change

GRAHAM GURNEY AND PETER LINZ
Sports Writing Reporters

In just three years since moving to Shaker Heights, junior Jacire Eaddy has become an important leader.

Eaddy, a basketball and football captain, helped the men's basketball team ovecome a 9-14 regular season record to reach the regional semifinal game for the first time in five years. He averaged 7.7 points per game, making him the thrid leading scorer on the team.

Eaddy's road to SHHS was unconventional. When he was 14, he came to Shaker from South Carolina to visit his family over Thanksgiving break. Later, he found out that the trip wasn't just a vacation; Shaker was his new home. "It was definitely a sad period of time because I wasn't supposed to be here and ended up being told I'm not going back," Eaddy said. The sudden nature of the move left him unable to say goodbye to a lot of friends and family.

At first, Eaddy was angry about the move. "I wouldn't say it was traumatizing, but it affected me a lot and hurt my mental health," he said. In the beginning, he generally felt lost. But then Eaddy joined the basketball team, which helped him make friends. He said the team became a family for him in lieu of the family he lost.

Varsity head coach Danny Young said Eaddy is always in the weight room for extra lifts, first in conditioning drills and is always trying to challenge anyone to a game so he can improve. Kevin Lowery, a teammate of Eaddy's, also called him one of the hardest-workers that he knows. "He's a leader because he does all the things that everyone else doesn't want to do," Lowery said. "He's always playing defense on the best guy and grabbing all the loose balls."

When he got to middle school, Eaddy said, he was one of the best athletes there. His goal to one day play on varsity with his brother motivated him to play basketball. When he made the varsity team as a sophomore last year, he achieved that goal.

> *"He's a leader because he does all the things that everyone else doesn't want to do. He's always playing defense on the best guy and grabbing all the loose balls.*
>
> Kevin Lowery

Driving past a Brunswick Blue Devil, junior Jacire Eaddy focuses on the goal during the Raiders' 69-43 home loss Feb. 21. Eaddy moved to Shaker Heights three years ago and strived to follow in his older brother Jerith Eaddy's footsteps by playing varsity basketball with him. He succeeded and became a basketball and football captain. Head men's basketball coach Danny Young relies on Eaddy, a 4.0 student, to mentor younger scholars.

Cora Bissett

He keeps in touch with his older brother, Jerith Eaddy. Their disagreements bring them closer. "People think that in the ideal relationship you would always be happy with each other, but to be honest, you're closer with the people that you have more problems with," Eaddy said. "Muscle tears make muscles bigger."

Eaddy didn't always know that he wanted to be an athlete. When he was younger, he was more interested in "living fast" and wanted to be a rapper, but his mother nudged him toward sports. "That's how I wanted to live. But her saying ball might be a better path, that was a good thing for me," Eaddy said. Ever since then, he has focused on athletics.

This year, as varsity starting quarterback, Eaddy had seven passing touchdowns and averaged 101.4 passing yards per game. Varsity head coach Alex Nicholson said that Eaddy has been positive and energetic ever since they've met and that Eaddy has wanted to be an exceptional athlete from the very beginning.

Becoming captain was a challenging task. First he had to apply for it, then interview with the coaches, and once he made it past the interview, he had to be voted captain by his teammates. Nicholson said he admired Eaddy's "ability to get his teammates together."

Young said that he can trust him to act as a mentor to younger students. He has maintained a 4.0 GPA this year and recently helped a middle school student who needed guidance with schoolwork. When Young reached out to Eaddy about it, he was ready to help. "It wasn't a charity case," Eaddy said. "He just needed someone to push him through it."

Eaddy said his faith in Christianity bettered his self image and helped him control his emotions. "I learned over time that you have to put God first in everything you do," he said. Said Eaddy, "The more faith I put in him, the better I do in school and sports."

LIZZY FAVRET

Lizzy Favret sets to shoot against Euclid Jan. 3 at home during a 55-14 Raider win. Favret, part of an athletic family, made the varsity team her freshman year and was named a captain as a sophomore. She will play for DI Universtiy of Wisconsin-Milwaukee next year, follwing the path of her older sister, Cici Favret, who plays soccer at DI Marquette Univeristy, and her mother, Christine Favret, who played basketball at DI University of Wisconsin.

Jason Miller

Senior Scores 1k Points on the Way to Division I Play

BAILEY BROWN AND LOUISE HUBBARD
Sports Writing Reporters

Lizzy Favret is the latest family member to join the ranks of Division I athletes.

The 6-foot-2 Favret signed an offer to play at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Nov. 13, 2024. Her sister, Cici ('24), plays Division I soccer at Marquette University, and her mom, Christine Favret, played Division I basketball at The University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Favret said she is excited and nervous. "I will most likely be playing power forward. At this level, everyone is skilled, strong and fast, so it makes me excited to play with great players and ultimately make me a better player," she said.

Favret scored her 1000th career point Jan. 22 during a home game vs. Medina. Karisma Penn ('09) was the last to do it in 2009.

"I injured my wrist a couple of games before my 1000-point; the injury made it harder for me to reach that goal because I had to limit my playing time a little, but it also helped me want to reach my goal more," Favret said.

Favret's height has enabled her to use post moves and strength to her advantage. "Since I am 6'2, my height gives me an advantage because I'm able to use it against my opponents, especially smaller players, and it helps defensively with rebounding and blocking shots," Favret said.

She uses a combination of different moves to get points on the board. "For most of my points scored, they were a combination of shots, whether it was in the post or shooting," Favret said.

Generally, taller players play center. However, Favret switched positions throughout the season based on matchups. "During the high school season, my positioning was very fluid. It mostly depended on match-ups against new opponents. My coach allowed me to play multiple positions, which helped make me a more versatile player," Favret said.

> "Your age doesn't change being a role model for your team, and I've learned that and want to tell my teammates to all be leaders, no matter how old they are.
>
> Lizzy Favret

Favret was captain of the women's basketball team this year. "Lizzy was chosen as captain based on her knowledge of the game and also her experience of being a four-year varsity player," head women's basketball coach Greg McIntosh said.

McIntosh said Favret's leadership and dedication helped shape the team. "Lizzy was a great example on and off the court. She led the team in all statistical categories and drove our team to win more games than the previous season. Off the court, her hard work has shown the younger players what it means to train and prepare to be the best player you can be," he said.

Joelle Burge, a junior basketball teammate, said Favret is a leader in every situation. "Every year of high school, she's always willing to help with any work, either in the classroom or on the court. Lizzy is a great person. Especially when I first got injured, she brought me flowers and always told me how I would return better and stay positive," Burge said.

Burge said Favret doesn't point out others' flaws after games; she builds upon her team's mistakes and reassures them. "Lizzy always brings people up, tells the team about her performance first, and then adds to what the team needs to work on. Lizzy has never been someone to point fingers at and blame people for previous mistakes. She always reassures her younger teammates on what everyone can work on and never has rude comments about her teammates' performance," Burge said.

In eighth grade, she started committing more time to the sport because her dad inspired her. "We would play in our backyard, and that is when I started loving the sport. He pushed me to my potential and allowed me to build a joy for it," Favret said.

When Favret started playing basketball, she said, it was a family event. "I would play basically every day with my dad and siblings, and it was always a lot for our family and made me a stronger and more experienced player, along with bringing our family closer," Favret said.

Her mom's Division I career also inspired her, and she credits her success to her sister, Cici. "Cici is the most disciplined person I know. Watching her become such a great athlete has inspired me to do the same," Favret said.

Cici has been her biggest inspiration for leadership as well. "I feel she goes through the same things as me, being a student-athlete and all the challenges. I look up to her leadership that she has held throughout her athletic career," Favret said.

As a freshman Favret played soccer and basketball alongside her older sister. As a sophomore, she and Cici were captains: Favret captained the basketball team, and Cici captained the soccer team.

Favret said her soccer experience helped her improve her basketball skills. "The switch between soccer and basketball was pretty easy, because I've been playing soccer since second grade, which has really put me in good shape for basketball and helps with footwork, which you use a lot — especially post moves in basketball," Favret said.

The basketball recruiting process made it hard to manage both sports, though. "It was challenging to juggle between the two because, during the recruiting process, it made me realize that I had to choose basketball over getting to do fun team-building activities with my soccer team because basketball was my main priority," Favret said

Burge said she is a great friend and leader. "I am most excited to get to watch her play in college and see her growth," said Burge, "no matter what she does with her career, but I am sad to see her go. But I'm wishing her the best."

Favret said her teammates can step into her leadership role. "When I was a freshman, I was scared to have leadership," she said, "but your age doesn't change being a role model for your team, and I've learned that and want to tell my teammates to all be leaders, no matter how old they are."

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ZOIE DURHAM

In control of her opponent, sophomore Zoie Durham demonstrates her wrestling skills. She took up wrestling in eighth grade. Her father, Cameron Durham, said his daughter receives support rather than criticism for her choice. She encourages girls to follow her into the sport. "I'm the only girl wrestler, and people respect you in different ways. After a while, you get treated as one of the boys. Teachers treat you with a different level of respect,"

On the Mat, Sophomore is Breaking Gender Barriers

Durham's morale, energy and focus help her defy a norm that she hopes will fall away as more girls follow her lead and choose wrestling

JARYN MARCUS AND SADIE STEADMAN
Sports Writing Reporters

Zoie Durham is changing the face of wrestling in Shaker Heights.

"When I started wrestling, I felt a spark that I didn't feel in other sports. It was more exciting," said Durham, a sophomore. She started wrestling in eighth grade and has continued through high school. She said she plans to continue wrestling in college.

In 1990, a mere 112 girls participated in high school wrestling in the United States. In 35 years, that number has increased to 64,000. In the early years, they joined men's teams. Not only did girls have a physical disadvantage, it was also not socially accepted for women to partake in men's sports.

In the beginning of Durham's sophomore year wrestling journey, she practiced with a wrestling dummy. "I was working with a dummy because [the coaches] didn't think I was strong enough to work with actual people," she said.

Practicing with a dummy felt like sexism to her, she said, because there were other teammates that she could have practiced with. Although, it did help her gain an advantage. "I was really good at defending hip tosses," she said.

Durham's dad, Cameron Durham, said she placed first in the Brush tournament this season in a much higher weight class than she usually did. The opponents were 30 to 40 pounds heavier — and she beat them all, her dad said.

Her dad said that he doesn't worry about Durham too much during matches. "When she used to wrestle boys, I didn't see any concerns of sexism," he said. "In fact, a lot of people were cheering her on because she was the only girl."

Durham said she is mostly confident at practice, but when it's time to compete, nerves hit. "I love the excitement of the day before the match. I love being overconfident, but sometimes I get humbled quickly," she said.

As a result of Durham's success this year, her coach allowed her to begin wrestling junior Michael Ratcliffe and senior Sam Luther. She said Ratcliffe has made a significant impact on her wrestling career. "He was one of the only nice people and one of the reasons I came to practice," Durham said.

Durham's coach, Jakee Fraizer, said having a lone female wrestler on the team boosts motivation and shapes his coaching style. "There's a natural challenge of boys not wanting to lose to girls," he said. "She's really good, and she's a girl. It's made me slow down and not be so mean."

"Coaching Zoie has deepened my appreciation for women's sports," Frazier said. "It's clear how much dedication and skill go into competing at a high level, and Zoie's drive has highlighted the effort often underappreciated in women's sports."

In practice and at matches, Durham's leadership, energy and focus help improve performances, said Frazier, and her presence in-

By the #s — GIRLS' WRESTLING EDITION

2020
Year of the first OHSAA girls' wrestling state tournament

20
Teams
Participated in the inaugural OHSAA tournament

1938
Year that wrestling became a co-ed sport in the United States

<1,700
Girls
Entered the 2025 OHSAA postseason tournament

via WKYC and the Associated Press

spires others and helps build a better and more inclusive environment. “Her morale is infectious. I feel in this season she has grown a lot with having more focus and drive to give her all,” Frazier said.

Durham’s love for the sport also fuels her encouragement of girls in wrestling. “I get so happy when I see other female wrestlers because I feel like I’m leading the way, and I make sure I’m doing well so that girls get empowered. I did it so now there’s enough singlets for a whole team of girls,” Durham said.

Athletic Director Michael Babinec said the high school needs seven girls to create a team. “We will continue to support girls wrestling, whether it’s one girl or 21 girls. We’ll keep putting the time in to send the girls to tournaments and events. I just hope that the growth here in Shaker kind of reflects the growth we’re seeing [in Ohio],” he said.

According to the OHSAA, the number of girls participating in wrestling has quadrupled in the last few years.

At times, Durham said, she doesn’t feel like training outside of practice and wants to sit on the couch, but she knows that doing extra training will make anyone a better athlete. She offered advice to other female wrestlers. “Stick with the sport,” she said.

“I’m the only girl wrestler, and people respect you in different ways. After a while, you get treated as one of the boys. Teachers treat you with a different level of respect,” said Durham — more kindly.

Babinec said Durham is the ideal student-athlete to break this barrier. “If you’re going to have your first female wrestler kind of set the tone and the standard, she absolutely is the very best person to do it. She works hard, she’s committed to it. She’s a great student. We’re very proud that she’s part of what we’re doing,” he said.

“The experience of coaching just one girl has been a pleasure. Especially with it being Zoie; she is the definition of a student athlete. She dominates in the classroom and on mat,” Fraizer said.

Babinec said that if Durham hadn’t been injured this season, she would have made it to states and won. She tore her right MCL in February and has since undergone surgery to repair it. “When she got hurt, it definitely affected the morale of the team,” her teammate Ratcliffe said.

“We stopped practice and played a game. Everything felt off when she got injured. The energy shifted.”

“When she got back from her injury, everyone was happy to see her,” he said.

Athletes don’t realize how much they love a sport until they’re injured, she said.

“Eventually, my coaches and dad help to get me out of the funk of feeling like I’m a loser or having less confidence,” she said.

When Durham is cleared to come back for next season, she said, she worries about stepping on the mat knowing injury is possible again. She is completing physical therapy to help regain her confidence.

Durham said she wants her success to be hard earned.

“If you’re a crappy wrestler, I’m not gonna be happy that I won,” she said. “But when it comes to beating an older teammate, I’m like, ‘Yeah, I’m that girl.’ ”

Zoie Durham on the mat in the high school wrestling room, wearing a knee brace made necessary by a torn MCL. Athletic Director Mike Babinec said that had she not been injured Durham would have won a state title this year. *Jaryn Marcus*

> *If you’re going to have your first female wrestler set the tone and the standard, she absolutely is the very best person to do it. She works hard, she’s committed to it. She’s a great student.*
>
> Mike Babinec

Atop the podium, Durham celebrates a win.

GRAPPLING WITH WRESTLING JARGON? HERE ARE 13 TERMS TO KNOW

Wrestling dummy

A lifelike training tool designed to simulate an opponent.

Takedown

A movement in which the opponent is brought to the mat from a standing position.

Double leg

The action of grabbing both of your opponent’s legs and driving them to the ground, forcing them to fall back.

High crotch single leg lift

Reaching high up the inside of your opponent’s leg, near their waist and lifting them in the air by driving your back leg up.

Escape

Wrestler who is on the bottom, and their opponent is in control, successfully gets out of their grip and gains a neutral position.

Reversal

Moving from the bottom position to the top position, gaining control of the opponent.

Near-fall

When a wrestler holds their opponent’s shoulders close to the mat but does not achieve a pin.

Half nelson

Passing one arm under the corresponding arm of the opponent and locking the hand on the back of the opponent’s neck.

Cradle

Grabbing the neck of the opponent with one arm, and wrapping the elbow of the other arm behind the knee of the opponent.

Tilt

Turning an opponent and exposing their back, but usually does not leading to a pin.

Referee’s position

Starting position where one wrestler is on their hands and knees (bottom position) and the other is on top, controlling them.

Singlet

A tight-fitting, one-piece uniform, typically made of spandex or nylon, worn by wrestlers.

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ISABELLA HAGENAARS

Hagenaars beats her Beaumont High School opponent to the ball at Russell H. Rupp Stadium during a junior varsity game Sept. 28, 2024. Hagenaars continued to play soccer after her move to Shaker Heights. In The Netherlands, soccer is a very popular sport, and most people play for a low-commitment club team instead of for their high school. In addition, Hagenaars swims and runs track for the SHHS teams.

Steve Hauck

From The Netherlands to Shaker Heights High School

Coming to the United States at age 14 means facing both unique challenges and common challenges, uniquely

WREN MACKLIN AND ADDIE DUNNO
Journalism II Reporters

Everyone who comes to the high school navigates social hurdles.

Who will I befriend?

Where will I sit at lunch?

Who is in my classes?

These questions are especially relevant to students who come to the high school from another country.

Isabella Hagenaars, a senior, is one of the 10 percent of U.S. civilians who are European immigrants. She was born in Utrecht, Netherlands, and grew up there with her mom, dad, brother and two younger sisters until she was 14.

At the end of July, before her sophomore year of high school, Hagenaars and her family moved to Shaker Heights. Her dad, originally from the Netherlands, had just retired from the military, and her mom, who is American, was also searching for a new job.

"The move itself was very hard because there was a big difference between both countries," Hagenaars said. "I definitely had, like, a hard time when I moved here with my mental health, 'cause not only did I miss my home, but also, it was hard to connect with new people."

The Netherlands is located between Belgium and Germany in western Europe and is about the size of West Virginia. In 2023, the population of the Netherlands was about 17.8 million. According to the United Nations, the Netherlands today has a low crime rate in comparison to other countries. In addition, sports such as soccer and field hockey are popular activities for after school or work.

Hagenaars swam and played soccer during her time in the Netherlands and continued to do so after her move to the United States. She played soccer on a club team in the Netherlands, which, like other European countries, doesn't have school-sponsored sports, Hagenaars said.

Most American students play sports for their schools during the season, but people play year-round club sports in the Netherlands. In addition, high school Dutch sports are more relaxed, and athletes rarely strive to play in college, compared to the United States, where it's common.

"It's not like a huge commitment unless you're really good and are trying to go far with it. It's kind of like it's a hobby," Hagenaars said.

Hagenaars said her family chose to live in Shaker Heights because the district offers the International Baccalaureate program at the high school.

According to the IB organization, the high school program is designed to build inquiry skills and strengthen students' desire to learn. Hagenaars' school in the Netherlands offered the IB program, and she wanted to continue her studies in an IB school.

Hagenaars noticed a difference in homework practices when she came to the high school. In the Netherlands, she said, teachers

MAKING NEW FRIENDS GETS HARDER AS YOU GET OLDER

An Association of American Universities study found that, overall, elementary school-age children made friends more quickly than teenagers because elementary students found things in common with each other, such as a shared activity. This recognition boosted the child's sense of belonging, making the them more academically motivated and engaged in class.

On the other hand, teenagers in the study were more cautious when making new friends, which led them not to experience the same advantages as younger children. Additionally, the teenagers were more likely to keep existing friendships from their old neighborhood, contributing to the wariness teenagers demonstrated when making new friends.

For Isabella Hagenaars, and other students who immigrate, maintaining relationships from old neighborhoods, overseas, can be nearly impossible, leaving students without connections to peers.

SHHS counselor Michelle Gamble has helped international students transition to the high school. She does this by having them plan their future academics and encouraging them to get involved in the Shaker community. "My overall goal is to help students feel welcomed into our school community," Gamble stated in an email. She does this by giving the students a space to express their feelings and by leading with an "open door" policy.

don't assign much homework, and when they do, it isn't graded.

"I honestly think I like this system better, how it's just like the homework also helps you with your grade instead of just the tests," Hagenaars said. She said that she does not do well on tests, and that a test taken too early in life shouldn't determine most of a student's future.

Hagenaars said that in every school in The Netherlands, when a student reaches sixth grade, they must take a big test to determine which high school they will attend.

According to NL TIMES, a Dutch news organization, the test is not necessarily fair among students. Some take a higher-level test that gives them better chances of getting into better secondary schools. This process resembles the way grades and test scores in most American high schools determine what college students will attend. Hagenaars plans to attend Case Western Reserve University. She said she is not sure what she will study, but she is considering pre-law.

Hagenaars said she expected SHHS to be like a stereotypical high school seen in American movies, with cheerleaders and jocks.

Hagenaars also knew that school safety is an issue in the United States. "It's definitely, like, a known thing in Europe that school shootings are really big here," she said. Along with other members of the class of '25, Hagenaars has experienced disruptions caused by assaults or presence of or reports of weapons at school since she started attending SHHS.

According to a CNN analysis of news stories and gun violence research, the United States had 57 times as many school shootings than Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom did from January 2009 to May 2018.

Hagenaars said she thinks the weapons-detection system introduced to the high school in January shows that a dangerous thing could happen, but also shows that the district wants to prevent it.

Hagenaars contrasted transportation in the United States and the Netherlands. "To get around here, you use cars, and in the Netherlands we use bikes," she said. About 84 percent of the Dutch population owns a bicycle compared to 74 percent of people who own a car in the Netherlands.

In addition, there are about 1.4 bikes per person in the Netherlands.

Tammie Rupnik, Hagenaars' mother, said her family used to ride their bikes daily in the Netherlands. "The kids would bike around 10 kilometers per day, as it was five kilometers each way to school," Rupnik said.

Most people would even bike year-round through rain and snow. It was normal to wear rain coats and rain pants if you were biking in the rain or bundle up in snow gear during the winter, even though it rarely snows.

However, Hagenaars and her family rarely bike now, and when they do, it is for fun, not functionality. "We don't consider the roads safe enough for our kids to bike on, as the average American driver is much more aggressive towards cyclists than in [the Netherlands]," Rupnik said.

"In the Netherlands, Isabella and her brother had a lot more freedom because they just got on their bicycles and rode everywhere," Rupnik said. She explained how her family had to adapt to life in the United States, given that Hagenaars and her brother, Johannes, had to get their driver's licenses. In the Netherlands, children can't legally drive until they turn 18, so when Hagenaars came to the United States, she was surprised to be able to start driver education right away.

In the front row, Alexandra, Piet and Elliana Hagenaars. Behind them stand Johannes Hagenaars, Tammie Rupnik and Isabella Hagenaars. The family moved to Shaker Heights in 2022 from The Netherlands. Hagenaars' parents were in search of new jobs, and Isabella wanted to continue in an IB school.

> *We don't consider the roads safe enough for our kids to bike on, as the average American driver is much more aggressive towards cyclists than in [the Netherlands].*
>
> Tammie Rupnik

Bicycle use declined in The Netherlands in the middle of the 20th century, but, in the 1970s, it surged. In 1971, there was an increase of traffic accidents in the country, and hundreds of children were killed.

As a result, the Dutch protested for more bike lanes, and succeeded. Today, most Dutch citizens of all ages use bikes as their form of transportation, and most cities and towns have lots of bike paths to accommodate them.

However, the most significant difference Hagenaars experienced concerned relationships.

"I think moving here in the middle of high school was very difficult because it's hard to make friends with people who already have their established friend group," Hagenaars said.

"I think it would have been a lot easier to move here when I was younger because Shaker is a place where people have lived for a long time and, like, grown up there and got to know everyone," Hagenaars said. She said she has struggled with being left out of cliques established years ago and had a difficult time being accepted into friend groups because no one wanted to branch out.

Psych Central, an online platform that provides mental health support, found that changing schools can increase chances of experiencing depression, anxiety, doubt and low self-esteem. Hagenaars advised anyone in the same situation to open up and talk to people.

"When I just started talking to people, they were nice to me," she said.

Hagenaars has two younger sisters who are 7 and 9 years old and attend Boulevard Elementary School. She said they had an easy time making friends and have adapted to their new country well.

Rupnik said the social transition is harder for high school students.

"My younger kids, when they were moving in, you set up a play date and they're fine, but I think for my older kids, that's a much more difficult transition to make," Rupnik said.

Three years after arriving at the high school from 3,914 miles away, Hagenaars will graduate from SHHS with her classmates June 4.

Said Hagenaars, "It's a good place with lots of good opportunities."

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GEOFFREY GAINFORD

High school men's rugby players take a knee after a full-contact scrimmage against Avon High School March 3, 2024 to hear from head coach Geoffrey Gainford, who has coached rugby at the middle school, high school and Collegiate levels. Gainford, who was born in England, played college rugby in the United States and wanted to become a coach to enable more people to enjoy the experience he had. Gainford, who teaches science at the high school, said sports are a vehicle for leveling the social playing field, especially for athletes growing up in communities where they don't see themselves represented.

Charlie Vann

Coach Shares Fun of Rugby with Athletes at Every Level

MIKO TROUPE AND WILL DAVIS
Position

Rugby coach Geoffery Gainford's path to Shaker Heights High School traveled three continents.

Gainford grew up in Cumbria, England. He said it was hard coming from an interracial family in his childhood community. "As a kid, coming from a multicultural family, it was tough because there weren't many Black families at the time," Gainford said. That's why he turned to sports. "I found that athletics was a way to level the playing field and become more accepted," Gainford said.

After graduating high school in 1991, Gainford moved to Belize, his mother's homeland. He lived there until July 1999, when he moved to Ohio to go to school and to follow a woman from Cleveland, Karen, who later became his wife.

He eventually attended Murray State University in Kentucky to become a teacher. He also played on the MSU rugby team. "It was awesome. That's why I wanted to coach kids, so they can have the same experience I had," Gainford said. He continued to play rugby competitively until he was 40 years old "It was a blast. It was both a social and athletic outlet," he said.

He got the chance to share his experience with students soon after graduating. "I was given the opportunity to coach when I first started teaching," Gainford said. Today, Gainford coaches three different levels of rugby: middle school, high school and college.

He led the middle school rugby team to a 7s Shield Championship victory in his first year coaching the team — the first rugby championship in Shaker Heights history. In November 2024, Gainford guided the high school men's rugby team to the Rugby Ohio State Shield 7s State Championship.

> *That's why I wanted to coach kids — so they can have the same experience I had.*
>
> Geoffrey Gainford

Rugby sevens is a fast-paced variation on traditional rugby competition in which teams comprising seven players (instead of 15), compete for two, seven-minute halves, (instead of two 40-minute halves). In both versions, teams aim to move the ball past their opponent's side of the field, or pitch, and score five points by touching the ball to the ground there.

Gainford's coaching impact extends beyond Shaker Heights. He also coached at Notre Dame College, where he led the team to a Division I-AA national championship in 2023.

Although Notre Dame College closed last year due to financial problems, Gainford's college coaching career continues at Walsh University in North Canton. "There's a greater commitment from high school to college," Gainford said. "There's an expectation, since they're coming to college to play rugby, that they know the basics of the sport, so the expectations are much higher."

He said his family adapts to his chaotic schedule. "You have to, of course, have a schedule that allows for that and a family that's understanding and supportive of that," Gainford said.

Gainford, a science teacher, has taught at the high school for more than 20 years, specializing in chemistry and physical science."I just like teaching chemistry and seeing my students have success," Gainford said.

"It's a hard class. He's good at relating hard topics to everyday stuff. He has a good sense of humor, but he can be serious," Gainford's student Henry Augustine said.

To some of his players, Gainford is more than just a coach; he is a trusted mentor. "I've always liked him as a coach. I've always admired him, and he's taught me how to grow up as an athlete. Anything you want to open up to him about, he will counsel you on it and guide you," senior rugby player Cordele Riley said.

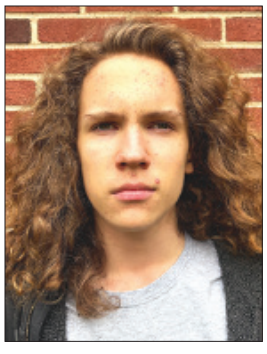
He also provides them with advice to overcome challenges on the field.

"He's a coach who will help you with the smallest things. He'll also help you with footwork, head positioning, hand positioning and whatever else you need help with," said Ty Bermudez, Gainford's nephew and rugby player. "He's like a father to me."

Gainford balances being a strict coach and a respectful mentor. "He's very serious during the game and he gives everyone equal and proper respect," Bermudez said.

Gainford's hobbies outside of school include cricket, baseball, camping, driving, fishing, rugby, and cycling. "I love being outside and active, and I also love sports, so I spend a lot of time outside of the classroom supporting local teams and teams I grew up watching in England," he said.

When traveling with the rugby team, Gainford won't leave the restaurant until he knows all his players have eaten. His motto, which aligns with his teaching and coaching philosophy, is "Nobody goes home hungry."



DECLAN GRAY

Declan Gray takes, or plays, a solo on his signature red bass, one of the 17 instruments he has learned to play since age 4. Gray participates in J@MS — Jazz at the Music Settlement, a youth group that rehearses on Saturdays. Solos and improvisation are some of his favorite things to do, and he spends most practice time on them. At J@MS he solos as much as he can and plans to take those skills to Berklee College of Music, where he will attend an elite summer jazz camp this summer.

Joseph Nagy

16 Instruments Later, Practice is Still Fun for Sophomore

CARLO DUDIK
JOURNALISM II REPORTER

It all started with a choice.

Sophomore Declan Gray started playing an instrument when he was 4. "My dad said I have to play an instrument, and he gave me the choice between piano, guitar and violin," he said.

He chose the piano. Twelve years later, at age 16, he is an accomplished musician who plays piano — and 16 other instruments.

As well as Shaker Jazz Band and Wind Ensemble, Gray is part of J@MS – Jazz at the Music Settlement, which is a youth music group that rehearses on Saturdays. The Music Settlement is an early learning and music education institute with two locations in Cleveland.

Each year, J@MS selects one or two top musicians to send to a summer jazz camp at Berklee College of Music in Boston. This year, Gray made the cut. Berklee is an acclaimed music school boasting alumni including music producer Quincy Jones and Alan Silvestri, the composer of "The Avengers" soundtrack.

While most young musicians who achieve advanced skills take lessons, Gray sticks to practice, barring two instruments.

"I've only ever taken lessons for piano and bass, but I own all the instruments I play besides bassoon so I can practice them when I want," he said.

"I spend like an hour a day practicing, a bit more on the weekends. I practice arpeggios and scales to stay conditioned, but improvisation is very important. Since there isn't usually sheet music for the songs I play, basslines are mostly improvisation, so practicing that in general keeps me sharp."

> *"You should have fun playing and practicing. Don't do it if you don't want to. If you don't have fun, there's no motivation to play.*
>
> Declan Gray

When a musician plays an arpeggio, he plays the notes of a chord up or down the scale in order. The exercise keeps skills sharp, but also helps with improvisation; former J@MS teacher Ed Ridley says that outlining a chord is one of two fundamental strategies for soloing.

Gray practices as much as he can, and musicians at all levels cite practice for their success. But Gray has a different take on being successful. "You should have fun playing and practicing," he said. "Don't do it if you don't want to. If you don't have fun, there's no motivation to play."

Fun has led Gray to gain experience with almost every instrument outside of the guitar and trombone. "It exposes me to new things," he said. "It improves my ability to problem solve, and it helps me pick up new skills faster in general."

Gray said that picking up an instrument is "one of the best things you can do," and the data backs him up. Studies from McGill University and the American Psychological Association found that playing an instrument relieves stress, builds up the muscles pertaining to one's instrument, and even helps the body produce antibodies needed to fight bacteria and diseases.

Despite the benefits, music might not be worth pursuing professionally, even for the most committed. Does Gray anticipate becoming a pro? "No," he said bluntly. "I'd definitely have music as a career if the pay was consistent."

Some musicians do find ways to make a living in music. Ridley said that he was "fortunate to have multiple revenue streams." He taught music, played for a church, did theater and recording work and played for bands in various genres, which gave him a steady income for 37 years.

For Gray and other young musicians, teaching and tracking down extra jobs in music is not in the cards. Gray said he would rather be an engineer or have a more stable job than try to juggle a musical career and a social life.

He said he won't continue to practice all 17 instruments as an adult, as it's a big commitment even right now. "I'd probably play bass, if I had to pick one. Bass is my favorite. It's also objectively the best instrument," he said, smiling. "I really like how it sounds, it's easy to play and bass clef improvisation sounds really cool to me."

As much as Gray enjoys playing all his instruments, practicing one consistently can be tough, let alone 17. "I don't feel like it's a chore. I like doing it, but practicing does take up a lot of time," said Gray. "That goes back to what I said before: Just have fun with music. It's one of the best things you can do."

Even if he does not pursue a career in it, or even keep it as close as he does today, Gray said he will continue to have music in his life. He plans to play in ensembles and on his own as a hobby. "I think music is one of the most valuable things we can do and create as people," he said. "Even if I'm not doing it full time or as frequently as I play now, it's not something that I want to lose."

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PAUL KELLY

Paul Kelly has been speaking straightforwardly to Global Studies and AP European History students for 23 years. "He's never gonna lie to students. He's never gonna hide things from students," said his colleague of 16 years, Jessica O'Brien. "He's always going to be up front and honest with them." Kelly didn't intend to become a teacher, but a program sponsored by the University of Notre Dame sent him to Arizona, where he taught physical education and "fell in love with teaching."

Camryn Dozier

Social Studies Teacher's History Tells a Family Story

A teaching trip to Arizona reset Paul Kelly's career plans, and family brought him back home to make them happen

CATE WANICK AND TATE POLATZ
Journalism II Reporters

Paul Kelly has been helping history students at Shaker Heights High School for 23 years, but it almost didn't happen.

Kelly, who graduated from John Carroll University, didn't always want to be a history teacher. "It was an accident," said Kelly. "My plan was to go into business. Things are going to happen to you that you don't know are going to guide you places."

Since becoming a social studies teacher at the high school, Kelly has taught Global Studies for freshmen and Advanced Placement European History for juniors and seniors. He taught Sociology during his first year at SHHS.

Kelly teaches a wide spectrum of history, from the Middle Ages to current day. He said he enjoys how everything in history overlaps. "I like the European stuff, where you get into how the Enlightenment and the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution all goes together. History always gets taught literally like, 'This starts and this ends,' but it really doesn't," Kelly said.

Kelly comes from a large Irish family in Youngstown. "It was a fun place to be. It was so interconnected. A lot of different people, a lot of money and a lot of poverty, so it was kind of wild. It was fun," said Kelly, who grew up with five brothers and sisters.

He said Youngstown left a lasting impression on him. "It really gave me a work ethic. I started working really young. I worked in high school and gave every check to my dad," Kelly said. Kelly's father was the chief financial officer of a trucking company in Youngstown and later went on to work in real estate.

While in graduate school at Cleveland State University, Kelly and Jacquelyn Faybek met. She also grew up in Youngstown, and they were both earning master's degrees in administration. Eventually, they married.

Jacquelyn said Kelly is always teaching. "In and outside of the classroom. He has great values from his dad, who raised six kids on his own. His wife died very young. The values that his dad instilled in him were very important, so I feel like he's always teaching what his dad taught him and wants our boys to have those values like a gentleman," she said.

The Kellys' twin sons, Brady and Brett Kelly, are sophomores at Gilmour Academy and play ice hockey. "I've learned that my father wants the best for me," Brett said. "My favorite thing about [him] is his willingness to do things for my family," Brady said.

That willingness to help extends to students. Neko Tien, a junior enrolled in Kelly's AP European History class, said she was absent for a day before a test as a break approached. She wanted to take the test before the break began because she had studied, so she asked Kelly if she could come to school and take it during the professional days when students were already on vacation.

"I don't know if it was his own time, but he

ORGANIZED CRIME IN YOUNGSTOWN PROMPTS REAL ESTATE DECISION

Youngstown, where Paul Kelly grew up, is about 70 miles southeast of Cleveland in Mahoning County and is the 11th most populous city in Ohio.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was a major steel-producing center. However, after the decline of the steel industry in the 1970s, Youngstown became a member of the Rust Belt and known for infamous incidents involving organized crime.

"There is a story," said Kelly. "I was really young, so I don't remember it. Our neighbor next door was supposed to take the fall for something, and he wasn't doing that. And so his front door got machine-gunned down, and the for sale sign went up in front of the house."

"And then, like two to three days later, his Cadillac exploded in the street. And then, he decided to take the fall and, you know, he went to jail, and his wife sold the house and a new couple moved in," he said.

In 1996, the Youngstown mafia targeted the newly elected county prosecutor for resisting "all the customary overtures, bribes and campaign contributions" according to "Crimetown USA," a New Republic article chronicling the crime syndicate. The investigation of that effort eventually led to the prosecution of U.S. Congressman James Traficant. who was arrested in 2001 for federal corruption and racketeering.

was very willing to allow me to come in and do it then. He thanked me," Tien said.

While at JCU, Kelly studied business but eventually went into counseling and then education.

In 1989 he participated in a volunteer program through the University of Notre Dame. The program took him to Tolleson, Arizona, where he taught in a public school. That experience would prove to be one of those guiding events.

"He took a year in Arizona where he was a gym teacher there and was doing volunteer work. I think he just fell in love with teaching," Jacquelyn Kelly said.

The 1990 Census reported a population of 4,434 for Tolleson. About 75 percent of residents were of Hispanic origin. Tolleson, Arizona surrounds Phoenix on both sides and was a rural community when Kelly taught there. He taught kindergarten through eighth grade. "I would say 70 percent of my students couldn't speak English," he said.

While teaching in Arizona, Kelly and a friend created a routine they called "Mr. Curious." He and his friends would wake students up early and rally them to attend a youth group active at the school."We'd show up at their house at 5 a.m. and I'd wake them up. I wore this plaid, funky Hawaiian shirt, these plaid shorts, this fishing hat. It was hysterical," Kelly said.

Kelly said he was considering staying in Arizona and continuing his work, but family pulled him back to Ohio. Kelly's younger brother, Brett, had Down syndrome. "He was a character and a half," Kelly said. "I only came back because of my brother. They wanted me to stay and take over the P.E. job."

Kelly said he ultimately became a teacher in Ohio because of Brett, who died in 2005, and because of his experience in Arizona. He said that he was "ruined for life" when he went out to Arizona. "I went out here to have a good time and kinda continue college. I was gonna go to law school and do all these things. And I got hooked on teaching. You know, not 'ruined,' just changed. Life-changing, redirecting experience," Kelly said.

Before Kelly worked at SHHS, he taught at Trinity High School in Garfield Heights. "I was teaching in a Catholic school, and I ended up applying here. They hired somebody that really couldn't handle the kids they gave her. So, I got the call and I was like, 'Yeah, man,' " Kelly said.

Like all veteran teachers, Kelly is confronting new challenges created by technology. In addition to competing for students' attention, history teachers have to help students filter what they see online to determine what's real. The Wall Street Journal reported that 78 percent of Gen Z gets some kind of news or information every day. The nonprofit advocacy group Common Sense Media asked 1,000 teenagers ages 13 to 18 to detect fake news on social media. The study found that about 35 percent had been fooled by fake news; 41 percent noted true information presented misleadingly; and 22 percent admitted having shared false information.

Kelly said that students approach him and say things they find online, and he always wants them to think about it. He will ask, "Where'd you get that? Why do you think that?"

"I don't want you to have my political views," he said. "I want you to have yours, and if you have yours, no one's gonna totally flip you around and corrupt what you think. If they're based on your truth, you're gonna be in great shape," Kelly said.

Paul Kelly grew up in a large Irish family in Youngstown. He said he returned to Ohio from Arizona, where he was enjoying his teaching work, to be closer them. In this portrait are Kelly, his wife, Jacquelyn, and sons, Brady and Brett. *Mae Lynn Photography*

> *I went out here to have a good time and kinda continue college. I was gonna go to law school and do all these things. And I got hooked on teaching.*
>
> Paul Kelly

Jessica O'Brien has been Kelly's colleague for 16 years. When she was hired, he was one of her mentors. O'Brien said it can be very difficult to engage students during lectures because they often bore easily, but Kelly can do it. "He does a really good job of pulling students in and getting them excited about the topic," said O'Brien, who teaches American Experience, African American History and Psychology.

Tien said Kelly always works to make class engaging."He puts time into planning different assignments for us. Like, we've had to write an interview from the perspective of an ancient Greek philosopher. He works hard to make it fun and so that we are learning," Tien said.

Kelly challenges his students to think about their own world and the one beyond Shaker Heights. He is always trying to make history "click" with the individual student. "There's always the kid that's really shy and quiet that goes crazy when we do the appeasement of Hitler. And they'd go off and go nuts. It's like, 'Yes! Finally, it clicks with you,' " he said.

Emma Khayat ('22) graduated from Ohio University this year. She took Kelly's AP Euro class during COVID, online and in person."Learning was challenging, but he was so easy to connect with as a person. He always had a story," Khayat said.

O'Brien said Kelly is straightforward with students and doesn't skirt difficult truths. "He's never gonna lie to students. He's never gonna hide things from students. He's always going to be up front and honest with them," she said.

Zahrah Washington, a junior, took Kelly's Global Studies class and is in his AP European History class this year. "I think Mr. Kelly is a very honest teacher and always says what's on his mind. He is very blunt and doesn't hold back on telling us the truth, and always has a fun story to share," Washington said.

Khayat described Kelly as a jokester. "I remember he saw me in person for the first time [after remote instruction ended], and he said, 'I thought you would be about three inches taller.' He never beats around the bush — a very honest man and will never miss the opportunity to roast you if he feels you guys are close enough," Khayat said.

Khayat said being in Kelly's class helped her value herself. "He made me feel like I didn't have to do everything the way everyone told me," she said. "It made me feel like I had agency and freedom."

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CATHY LAWLOR

English teacher Cathy Lawlor in discussion with 11 Advanced students in Room 105. Reading informs writing, and Lawlor models close reading analysis and annotation of text at the start of every school year to help students engage deeply with the works they read.

Camryn Dozier

Supporting Writers Through Their Process, for 31 Years

English teacher wants to help every student improve their writing, and become a better writer, by revision

LAUREN JALICS AND NORA MAYS
Journalism II Reporters

If you walk into Room 228, the Shaker Writing Center, you will see small, green pennants strung across a bulletin board, spelling out three words: Respect the process.

Cathy Lawlor, English teacher, founder and co-director of the Shaker Heights High School Writing Center, is devoted to that process. She emphasizes revision and one-on-one conferences to benefit students and the school.

Lawlor, who began teaching English at the high school in 1994, strives to ensure students improve both their writing and themselves as writers. For 31 years, she has assigned essays, read them and written feedback, and returned them to students. And then?

"I let them revise those as many times as they want," Lawlor said.

Lawlor graduated from Cleveland Heights High School and earned her bachelor's degree from Ohio University, where she majored in journalism. She added an education major and earned a teaching certification, she said, originally as a backup plan. She graduated summa cum laude. She then earned a master's degree from Cleveland State University.

She said that she has always loved reading and writing. Lawlor ultimately chose to pursue a career teaching English right after graduating from OU after having an amazing experience while student teaching at Collinwood High School in Cleveland.

WRITING CENTERS, OF A SORT, HAVE EXISTED FOR NEARLY A CENTURY

The original writing "labs" and "clinics" began in the United States around 1930, as seen in the Middle East Technical University's article on these centers.

Genie N. Giamio, a professor at Middleburry College, reported in the Los Angeles Review of Books that writing centers were created as a response to higher education enrollment pressures and struggling students. The first writing laboratory was established at the University of Minnesota in 1932, according to the Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Writing centers increased in popularity during the 1970s due to the rising population of international students at American universities whose first language was not English. Writing centers today are available to and popular with all types of students. The College Board Blog reports that most colleges offer writing centers as resources for their students.

In U.S. high schools, it's harder to determine how many writing centers exist, but in 2023, the Secondary Schools Writing Association estimated the number at more than 400.

In 1997, she had a chance to teach journalism and become The Shakerite adviser, but chose to stick with teaching literature and writing instead, Lawlor said.

In her 31 years of teaching, she has taught nine different English classes in addition to the writing center: 9 Honors English, 9 College Prep English, 11 Language and Literature, 11 Advanced/IB Literature, Social Issues in Fiction and Nonfiction, Anatomy of Writing, 12 Contemporary Fiction, 12 AP Literature, and 12 AP/IB Literature. This school year, she is teaching 11 Advanced/IB Literature and 12 AP Literature.

In the United States, writing centers are very popular in universities. However, there are less than half as many centers in high schools than in universities. In 2014, Lawlor decided that SHHS should be a part of the small population that offers these helpful services and resources. The SWC operates from a belief that "writing is central to all disciplines and subject areas, that writing should be seen as a process, that everyone can improve as a writer, and that writing is not, nor should it be, a solitary endeavor."

SWC interns can help students with any kind of writing, including college essays, IB personal projects, lab reports and AP Document Based Questions .

Lawlor's emphasis on revision in her English classes inspired her to create and develop the SWC. In her English classes, she regularly assigns take-home essays, she said. She chooses to let her students revise their work

as much as they want because when she was in high school, she rarely received any meaningful comments on her writing, and was only allowed to write one draft.

Throughout her career, Lawlor has allowed unlimited revisions for all students. "I have students who come in to revise essays that have earned a D and essays that have earned an A-minus," she said.

Before her students can revise their take-home essays, Lawlor requires them to attend writing conferences after school. Every day of the week except for Mondays, when teachers have to attend meetings, she holds conferences in her classroom or in the writing center. "I make myself as available as possible, though fitting everyone in can be challenging," Lawlor said.

During these in-person conferences, Lawlor said, she tries to emphasize collaboration in a one-on-one setting between herself and a student. When her conference slots fill, Lawlor meets with students during her planning periods, and occasionally from home via Zoom meetings on the weekends.

Lawlor's idea for the center came to her one day when she was having lunch in 2014, two years before it opened. She knew that most colleges maintain writing centers and was inspired to help more students understand writing as a process that relies on revision. During that interval, she worked to gain approval for the SWC, and researched the theoretical and ethical foundations of conferencing. Lawlor also researched practical details about how to organize and manage a writing center.

"The process for approval was a long and arduous one," Lawlor said. First, she had to present her idea to her English department chairwoman at the time, Elaine Mason. Then, she met with the interim principal at the time, and talked with her fellow faculty members to get feedback and pitch the idea for a writing center. After that, Lawlor had to write an official proposal, which had to be revised many times, and present it to Dr. Terri Breedan, the director of curriculum and instruction at the time. Her proposal was approved, and the SWC became a part of the district's strategic plan, Lawlor said.

When she began researching and planning the center, the only public high school in the area with one was Chagrin Falls High School. "Chagrin Falls Writing Center was key," Lawlor said. She visited and met with its founder. "I got an idea of how their writing center was run," Lawlor said. She also read books and attended a writing center conference in 2018 to prepare for and improve the SWC

More recently, writing centers have been established at Orange High School and Hawken School.

Before the writing center opened during the 2016-17 school year, Lawlor spent her summer preparing Room 228. She painted the future SWC room in blues and greens. "I wanted an inviting, bright, happy space," she said. Lawlor ordered some tables and chairs and repurposed old furniture. "I refurbished an old dresser and made it into our coffee bar," she said. The center has snacks, coffee, tea, hot chocolate and candy for its visitors. Lawlor also works to make the room inviting by including seasonal and holiday decorations, plants and a welcome mat.

SWC interns are trained in tutoring methods appropriate for writing conferences before they begin helping students. They read students' work and ask questions that help the writer better understand their own thinking and how to make it clear through the writing process. They do not write, edit or revise students' work. Interns complete training each September to learn how to professionally communicate with and respect all students and teachers who visit the SWC. Interns are prohibited from predicting grades, said Lawlor. Interns are also not allowed to gossip, talk about teachers or belittle assignments.

"I think a Writing Center is such a vital tool for students at any school," she said.

"We help the student writer not necessarily improve the writing, but improve themselves as a writer. Coming to a peer instead of a teacher is very beneficial." She believes that writers should get as many sets of eyes on their work as possible.

Lawlor's connections with students draw them to become interns. "She took the time to get to know each student as a human being, not just a pupil," said Gus Mahoney ('17) one of the center's first interns. Mahoney explained that the common stereotype about young, gay boys loving their English teachers was absolutely true for him — and Lawlor is his favorite. So, when she invited Mahoney to become one of the SWC's first interns, he didn't hesitate.

"When my favorite English teacher tells me to jump, I say, 'How high?' So, I joined," he said.

Senior Josephine Rich is an SWC intern this year. "I heard a lot of positive things about it during my junior year, about things like the environment and help it offered," said Rich, who had friends in Lawlor's 11 English Advanced classes. "Ms. Lawlor is genuinely interested in what makes us students and how we think. She works primarily with juniors and seniors, so she is used to treating her students like adults in the way she talks and teaches," she said.

When COVID-19 hit in March 2020, the SWC had to completely close. In the 2019-2020 school year, interns had held 1,321 writing conferences before COVID hit.

"Our main thing was that we were very personal, and the interactions that we had with our student writers would be in person," Lawlor said. The writing center room is less than half the size of an ordinary classroom, and has six round tables where writers and interns sit together when collaborating.

In the 2021-2022 school year, the SWC reopened with many new guidelines. Interns and students maintained social distance by working on different Chromebooks but on the same document, said Lawlor. Everyone wore masks, and there was also an increase in virtual writing center conferences, she said. It took about a year to fully bounce back after COVID-19; only 621 writing conferences occurred in 2021-2022, Lawlor said.

Eight years after graduating, Mahoney said that being Lawlor's student continues to affect his life. He lives in Brooklyn, where he runs his own theater company, which requires writing grants and submitting applications. "All I learned about the structure of writing from the writing center has worked in my favor a million times," he said. "She has made me a better artist, and more importantly, a better person."

English teacher Aimee Grey, Lawlor's friend and colleague, became co-director of the SWC in 2018. She said that Lawlor is uniquely committed to her students. "She cares about her students like no other," Grey said.

Lawlor and her husband, who is a teacher as well, are parents to two adult sons and a rescue shepherd/lab mix puppy named Winnie. Her eldest son is a journalist, and her other son attends her alma mater, Ohio University. When she can find time, Lawlor said she loves to garden and exercise. She grows flower and vegetable gardens in her yard, and she plans to earn a certification in personal training. Lawlor said she loves to do high-intensity interval training and to lift weights.

Almost 10 years after the SWC opened, she remains excited about what she sees happening there.

"I still get really geeked out about that, that just really positive energy around writing," she said. While she plans to retire in the next few years, she still has goals for the Shaker Writing Center. Among them is extending the center's reach beyond the high school. "I would love to be able to form a partnership with the elementary schools," Lawlor said.

In the meantime, the SWC is here to help everyone at SHHS respect the process. Said Lawlor, "Writing is never going to be perfect."

A bulletin board just inside the door of the Shaker Writing Center displays its slogan — and English teacher Cathy Lawlor's philosophy. Lawlor founded the SWC, which opened in 2016.

> *"All I learned about the structure of writing from the writing center has worked in my favor a million times."*
>
> Gus Mahoney

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MADDIE GREENE

Freshman Accepts Challenge of Setting Team up For Success

LOGAN COLEMAN AND IAN FIELDS
Sports Writing Reporters

Switching positions was all it took.

During her eighth-grade volleyball season, Madison Greene was a middle blocker/hitter.

In eighth grade, Greene said, she struggled to get playing time and did not start in any games. “I knew I had to step my game up a little bit. So literally every single day after open gyms, I would go home, get my volleyball, go outside and practice setting on my wall, like, for an hour,” Greene said.

This year, Greene switched positions when freshman women’s volleyball coach Tiffany Stokes challenged her to play setter. The setter’s main responsibility is to receive the second pass and then pass the ball to hitters so they can spike it. Greene said setters put the ball high, slow and in hitters’ preferred places.

She looked at senior Elliana Williams as a model. “She is also a setter, and she is really good. And I want to be more like her skill-wise,” Greene said.

Greene said she spent hours setting the ball against the wall outside of her home. She would set the ball very fast, change her pacing and work on ball control. She also practiced setting the ball backwards and against the wall, while slowly rotating her position, to practice setting from different angles.

Her coach provided lots of practice opportunities. “We were doing six on six, I believe, and she just had me setting. And for the whole open gym, she kept having me setting and then continuing on from that,” she said.

Greene watched videos to learn more about setting. She practiced hand placement, making sure she touched the ball with both hands at the same time, as it is a penalty for players to set with uneven hands. She also emphasized finger placement, making sure her pinkies weren’t touching the ball because that can result in unwanted spin.

“I would lift my palms up, kind of like you’re eating a hamburger, but like a little wider. It’s a lot more fingertips and no palms, and you don’t really touch your pinkies on the ball either. So I just had to learn how to, like, not do that because that would give me a lot of spinning,” she said.

> *“I knew I had to step my game up a little bit. So literally every single day after open gyms, I would go home, get my volleyball, go outside and practice setting on my wall, like, for an hour.*
>
> Maddie Greene

Freshman volleyball player Maddison Greene moved to the position of setter this year and got busy practicing. In addition to mastering the art of passing the ball legally, she had to learn how to set differently based on the play — outside, or to the middle, where the middle hitter plays. “We always ran into each other,” said Greene, until she and her teammate, middle hitter Ari Davis, sorted it.

Aaron Sharpley

Greene eventually earned consistent playing time. Her reliability stands out to teammates. “She is a very reliable person when it comes to volleyball — like jumping to block and being there when we need her,” freshman teammate Ava Morris said.

Greene is a member of the Student Group on Race Relations and values youth education, equity and equality. She said she makes a point to help inform younger students about racism and wants every voice to be heard. “I am in SGORR because I liked it when I was in elementary and middle school, and they came to my classroom, and I wanted to make a difference in kids’ lives about it,” Greene said.

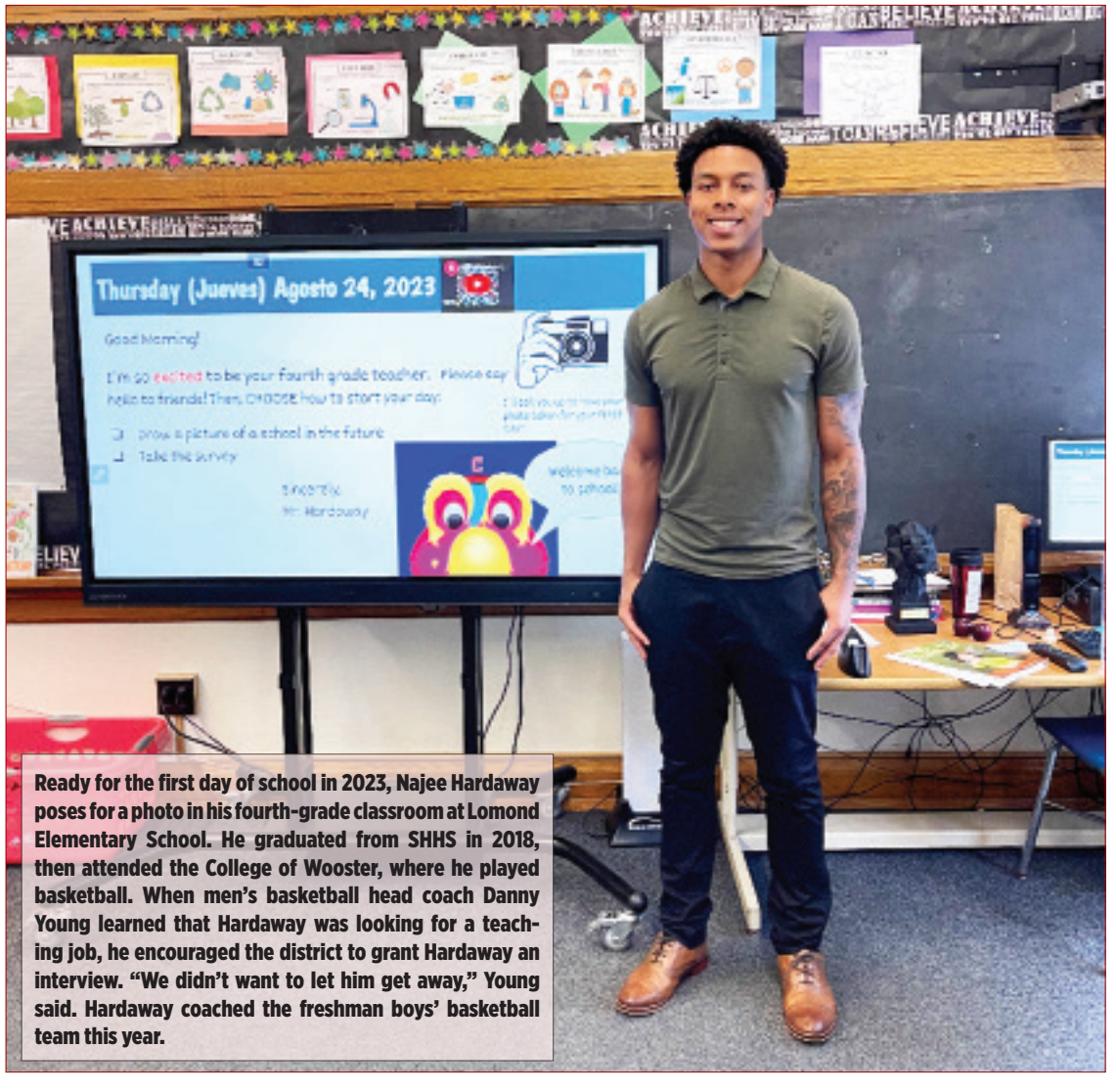
She has four younger siblings whom she babysits, taking responsibility for dinner and bedtime. She said she tries to make this a positive experience for them. “I remember one time my mom was gone, and I set up the living room to be like a slumber party-type situation. I made popcorn for them and I got some juice for them, and we watched all the ‘Despicable Me’ movies,” she said.

Greene said she relies on her mother for advice and inspiration. “She made me want to be a better person so that I can be a good role model within our household,” she said. She said she gets the most inspiration from her father, who has worked in real estate for the last 15 years. “He is very important in my life,” Greene said.

Her commitment to be a role model extends to the classroom. Her history teacher, Brian Berger, said she helps peers succeed. “She can make people stay on task,” he said.

After putting so much work into becoming a setter, Greene suffered a season-ending concussion at an away game. Watching her teammates play after that was hard. She said, “Seeing them not play with me was heartbreaking.”

NAJEE HARDAWAY


Thursday (Jueves) Agosto 24, 2023
Good Morning!
I'm so excited to be your fourth grade teacher. Please say hello to friends! Then, CHOOSE how to start your day:
Draw a picture of a school in the future
Take the survey

Ready for the first day of school in 2023, Najee Hardaway poses for a photo in his fourth-grade classroom at Lomond Elementary School. He graduated from SHHS in 2018, then attended the College of Wooster, where he played basketball. When men's basketball head coach Danny Young learned that Hardaway was looking for a teaching job, he encouraged the district to grant Hardaway an interview. "We didn't want to let him get away," Young said. Hardaway coached the freshman boys' basketball team this year.

Courtesy of Najee Hardaway

Former Raider Basketball Player Returns to Classroom

ETHAN SCHEER AND JULIAN VAQUERA-LITTLE
Position

When he was a student-athlete at SHHS, returning as a teacher-coach wasn't on Najee Hardaway's mind.

"I would say teaching wasn't really my passion in my adolescent years," he said.

Five years after graduating, however, Hardaway ('18) came back. He's finishing his second year teaching fourth grade at Lomond Elementary School and first coaching freshman boys' basketball.

Fourth-grade Lomond teacher Kelly Grahl said Hardaway has a natural ability to connect with his students. "He has brought a calm and steady presence to the fourth grade here. He has a knack for connecting with kids of all ages," Grahl said.

Outside of his fourth-grade classroom, Hardaway connected with basketball players this year. "He helped me get my confidence up and make the right decisions on the court," freshman basketball player Justin Taress said.

As a new teacher who also coaches, Hardaway faces a unique struggle. "Going from being a college student ;athlete to a full-time teacher in the matter of months was, for lack of a better word, shocking. Finding time for making both lesson plans for teaching, and practice plans for coaching, is admittedly pretty tough," Hardaway said.

But he has found ways to overcome these struggles, and people to help him. "Luckily, I have great teams in both areas in which we lean on each other. On both my fourth-grade teaching team and the coaching staff, we divide and conquer so that the workload is evenly distributed," he said.

> *"I think the best thing you can do is solely put your energy and effort into the things that you can control.*
>
> Najee Hardaway

Hardaway is not new to Shaker basketball. He was a member of the varsity team for two years that won a district championship.

"Najee was a role player," head coach Danny Young said. "He was a great glue guy and very valuable."

Young said it's great to bring back former players as coaches. "They understand you, and understand what you're up against," he said. "It's great having Najee here because he knows what it takes, he knows our tradition, and he knows our successes, and he knows how to handle adversity."

Young said the best word to describe Hardaway is *resilient*. "No matter what was thrown at him, he was always able to keep going forward," he said.

Hardaway didn't plan on becoming a teacher, especially with his success on the court as a kid. He played college basketball at the College of Wooster. Senior year, he was one of only two players to play in and start in all 28 games.

Young said he jumped at the possibility of Hardaway's return. "I made sure the district knew to get him an interview fast. We didn't want to lose him," Young said.

Hardaway said returning to a new role required adjusting to his new status. "I will say, at times it can be a bit weird or awkward, due to the fact that some of my old teachers, administrators and staff personnel are now my coworkers," he said.

Hardaway offered advice for making the most of a player's abilities. "The best thing you can do is solely put your energy and effort into things that you can control," he said. "There are a lot of uncontrollables while playing basketball. Focusing your attention on things the coach does that you don't like, refs, playing time and other things out of your control is a waste."

Some people didn't expect him to make use of his abilities to become a teacher. "I feel like everyone around me is surprised about my occupation, including myself at times," he said. "However, people often tell me, after a little further thought, that it actually makes sense that I'm a teacher and that they think [I am] a pretty good one."

HARDAWAY'S UNCOMMON CHOICE

Statistically speaking, Hardaway's return to the district to teach fourth grade is remarkable; in 2021, only 1.3 percent of all American teachers K-12 were Black males. According to the district's human resrources department, in grades preschool through five, 32 teachers are Black, and only four of those teachers are Black males. Throughout the district, 78 teachers are Black, and only 18 of those teachers are Black males.

The small number of Black teachers does not go unnoticed, including by high school math teacher Jayce Bailey.

"It was very apparent to me that the number of African-American teachers here was very low, possibly 10 or less," said Bailey, who teaches Statistics and Algebra II. "It was even more apparent to me how many African-American teachers were male. I believe it was only two — that's including me and [art teacher Keaf] Holliday."

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MERYL HARING

On the track, art teacher Meryl Haring, who has been coaching pole vaulters at the high school since 2020, works with juniors Isaac Hren and Jayla Taress. Haring participated in pole vault as a high school student and was a gymnast before taking up the field event. .Before it became a competitive sport, pole vaulting was a practical activity in ancient Greece, used for vaulting over enemy walls or hopping onto a horse. According to the University of Southern California, pole vaulting was introduced into gymnastics as a vertical jump event in 1775. In 1850, the first competitions were held. Pole materials have evolved over the years. from hickory to iron, to bamboo, and then to fiberglass and carbon, which remain the materials of choice for poles today.

Camryn Dozier

Art Teacher Answered Call for a Pole Vaulting Coach

JOEY FRIGUGLIETTI AND ISAIAH ESPAY
Sports Writing Reporters
RACHEL WREN AND VIVIAN CLEMENT
Journalism II Reporters

Art teacher Meryl Haring didn't know what to say when a student asked her to be her pole vaulting coach.

It was 2020, and a freshman wanted to compete in the event. "Kyla Taress heard that I had a background in pole vaulting and asked me if I could coach her," Haring said. "We didn't have a pole vaulting coach yet."

Kyla ('23) was a standout track athlete. Haring told her she would take the job.

Pole vault is one of two vertical jump field events; high jump is the other. Carrying their pole, usually between 11 and 17 feet long, vaulters sprint down a straight runway. When they near a designated take-off box, vaulters plant the pole, which bends and launches them over a bar suspended by two posts. They aim to clear the bar at the designated height, typically set at seven feet, and increased by fractions of an inch. Vaulters have three attempts to clear a height. Whether they succeed or not, they land safely on a thick foam mat.

Even if a vaulter doesn't clear an ambitious height, Haring recognizes each step toward that goal. She said she "celebrates the small successes." Small wins boost athletes' morale — important when learning a sport like pole vaulting, which Haring said is "60 percent physical and 40 percent mental."

Haring's background in the sport includes a pole vaulting career at Highland High School in Medina County, where population is not as dense as it is in Shaker Heights. When Kyla asked her to coach, Haring thought adding the event might be out of reach at Shaker. "Pole vaulting is a more rural sport because you need a lot of space for it," she said. However, Russell H. Rupp Field accommodates a runway and landing zone beyond the west end zone.

> *"I don't remember being scared. Particularly for girls, a lot of female vaulters are gymnasts first, and you're kind of used to that — feeling fear and working through it.*
>
> Meryl Haring

So, in 2020, Kyla and Haring got to work. "We started learning how to work together," said Kyla, who now pole vaults as a member of the Kent State University track and field team.

Haring said she never expected someone to ask her to be their pole vaulting coach. Even Kyla was surprised that someone else loved the sport. "It's scary and dangerous," Kyla said. "But it gets easier. I still get anxious during meets sometimes."

This year, Haring coaches two pole vaulters: juniors Jayla Taress (Kyla's sister) and Isaac Hren. Both attribute their success to Haring.

Hren began pole vaulting in the spring of his sophomore year. Haring pushed him to try. During the cross-country season, Haring told Hren he would be a good pole vaulter, and he has been immersed in the sport ever since.

Jayla joined during her freshman year, encouraged by her sister. Since Kyla's graduation, Jayla has built a strong relationship with Haring. "At track meets, she always checks up on me if I'm having a bad day and tells me that I tried my best. She has just become a great support system for me," Jayla said.

Haring said she can relate to the pressure of competing in a dangerous sport. "I don't remember being scared," she said. "Particularly for girls, a lot of female vaulters are gymnasts first, and you're kind of used to that — feeling fear and working through it.

Haring started vaulting in 10th grade. "It was not a sport for women until I was a sophomore," she said. She was less concerned about being injured than impressing her grandfather, who was never impressed by anything. "I remember telling him when I finally cleared 10 feet, and he said, in a very heavy Boston accent, 'You're just like, eh, whatever,' " Haring said. He would tell her about landing on straw and using glass poles to jump that high, she said.

Haring was first a gymnast. "There's a lot of strength, speed and agility involved, so it's a natural transition for gymnasts," she said. "With coaching Jayla, I can be like, 'Oh, it's just like this move.' And then she's like, 'Oh, OK,' because she's familiar with being in the air and having to be aware of what her body is doing."

Kyla was a gymnast for 12 years. "I would say 90 percent of pole vaulters were previously gymnasts," she said.

Haring said she used a gradual approach to teach Hren how to use his momentum instead of his strength. "It's much more typical for boys to have that issue, especially if they weren't previously gymnasts," she said. "Whenever somebody tries to pull through the first time, they want to muscle themselves up, meaning they want to use their arms, and it's not what you're supposed to do. What you're supposed to do is run as fast as you can, and push up through the pole and swing," Haring said.

This year, Hren cleared 11 feet at a meet. He said, "She goes the extra mile, just making sure we have everything we need to be successful."

LOUISA HOLDA

Sophomore swimmer Louisa Holda stands behind the block, ready to race at her second appreance at the OHSAA state championship meet Feb. 21 at the C.T. Branin Natatorium in Canton. Holda is waiting for a 100 breastroke heat. She broke the high school 100 breastroke record at that meet. She broke two school records in middle school and was the only Raider swimmer to qualify for the state meet last year .

Shay Malone

Sophomore Trains Hard, Qualifies for 2nd State Meet

LILY POLLINO AND ELLA LOPRESTI
Sports Writing Reporters

At the rate Louisa Holda is going, records are in danger.

Holda concluded her sophomore swim season with success in championship meets and a new high school record. In February, she broke the SHHS 100 breaststroke record of 1:05.18 in the preliminary round of the state meet with a 1:04.63, finishing eighth. She dropped 0.05 seconds from her district finish two weeks before, achieving a new personal best.

She then topped her own effort in the state finals, placing sixth with a time of 1:04.16, dropping 0.47 seconds from her Friday preliminary round time.

"It went pretty well," Holda said of her sophomore season. "There's always more goals, but overall I'm pretty happy with it."

Holda lived in Austin, Texas until sixth grade when she moved to Shaker. During her time in Texas, Holda swam, but less competitively. "I wasn't super competitive when I was swimming in Texas, so when I moved here I wanted to be a part of something, and it's kind of crazy that it's become a really big part of my life," Holda said.

In 2022, when Holda was in eighth grade, she broke two 27-year-old freestyle records — the 100 (56.56) and 50 (25.89). During her freshman year in 2023, she made varsity and was the lone freshman to qualify for the state meet.

She swam in the 200 medley relay, the 400 free relay, and the 100 breaststroke. In the 100 breaststroke, she achieved a personal best of 1:05.36. She placed 15th in the preliminary round and qualified for finals, where she placed 11th.

> *"Louisa got Iron Raider because she was at every single lift, every training session for November. She completed every set and rep and she was a freaking monster.*
>
> Joe Schlesinger

Holda adheres to an intense practice schedule. "Some weeks, it is eight practices and three lifts, but usually it is just practice Monday through Saturday," she said, "but because we don't have the Woodbury pool anymore it is harder."

Woodbury Elementary School is currently closed due to the district's facilities renovation plan; the swim team had to swim at the middle school this year and will continue to until Woodbury reopens.

Holda not only spent a lot of time in the pool, but also in the weight room. "Louisa got Iron Raider in November because she was at every single lift, every training session for November. She completed every set and rep and she was a freaking monster," Head of Sports Performance Joe Schlesinger said.

"She has great division one potential as a swimmer."

Holda's leadership stands out to her teammates. "She has made a good impact. She is a great teammate and has made everyone feel welcomed on the team. She has a good work ethic and her energy is good," senior swimmer Morgan DeLong said.

Outside of the high school swim team, Holda swims for Shaker's club team, the North Coast Aquatics Team. Founded in 2022, NCAT combined Shaker Heights' and Solon's swim teams.

At the end of the summer club team seasons, Holda participates in at least two championship meets.

Even during her club season, Holda spends a lot of time practicing. "It's not as fun, there's less teammates and less hype for the meets, but as long as you keep setting goals and going to meets it's pretty similar to high school swimming. I try to go to six practices a week," Holda said.

Holda also understands the mental toll it takes to swim at a high level. She said she has learned to navigate it. "I have definitely gotten better at managing stress over time. I really like racing, so if I can get in the zone, that is good," Holda said.

On a typical race day, Holda wakes up early, so sleep is essential. "I set out specific times and create a routine around swimming. I generally go to bed pretty early. I try to be in bed by around 10:00 and wake up around 6:30," she said.

DeLong said teammates recognize Holda's commitment. "She is very competitive, but she has fun while she does it. She knows how to work hard and have fun in practice. When it is time for a meet she is always really prepared," she said.

Holda said she would like to add more film study to her routine. "I watch film during practice sometimes, but rarely ever before or after meets, although I should probably start doing that," she said.

Holda plans to continue her swimming career after high school. She said, "I do hope to swim in college. I haven't thought about where, but I would like to."

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VIKKI LONG

Athletic administrative assistant Vikki Long, busy at her desk in the Athletic Office, located in the south gym. Long has been in the high school's athletic department for 29 years, working to make sure all the sports programs run smoothly. She works alongside Athletic Director Michael Babinec and Assistant Athletic Director Marc Enie as well as the many coaches and athletes involved in Shaker athletics. She is coaches men's bolwing and is adviser to the MAC Sister Scholars and Black Athletes Giving Support.

Camryn Dozier

The Key Player on a Team that Manages all the Teams

Going strong at 31 years, Long remains the glue that holds the Athletic Department together as SHHS expands its sports offerings

RUTH BECKER
Journalism II Reporter

Ask Vikki Long about her typical day, and you'll realize that when you're keeping an athletic department running, there is no such thing.

"There is no typical day," she said. "I do so many things, I haven't really thought about it."

Long is the athletic administrative assistant for the Athletic Department. She has worked for the district for 31 years and started working at the athletic office in 1996.

Long's morning routine starts with answering every email she has received since the day before. "There's a lot," she said. Then she sends out all of the early dismissal emails, which tell teachers which of their students will be absent that day for sports contests. She said that this task is more difficult in the spring because so many games are rained out.

Once she gets that out of the way, she answers all of the messages she has gotten from coaches, "because they have lots of questions," Long said. Next, she answers her voicemails.

"By the time I get through 'my morning,' it's like my morning is over. It's time for lunch," Long said.

Athletic Director Michael Babinec said that he, Long and Assistant Athletic Director Marc Enie share the responsibilities of keeping the high school's sports running."I would say that we are all kind of interchangeable," he said.

Both Long and Babinec described the athletic office as a "well-oiled machine."

However, each does take on unique primary tasks. Enie maintains practice schedules, coordinating which teams use the gyms and fields and when. All three handle transportation tasks. In addition to handling emails, voicemails and questions, Long focuses a lot of her time on purchases and invoices.

An invoice, similar to a bill, is a request of payment for goods or services. In order to pay for things, the district must create an invoice for every transaction. There is a lot that leads up to receiving and paying an invoice.

The process starts with a need. "Say the baseball team is ordering baseball caps," Long began. First she would do a requisition, meaning an internal request to buy the number and style of caps the team wants. The requisition would have to be approved by the athletic director, and then by the principal. After those two stops, it would go to the treasurer's office at the administration building, where it would undergo another review process. If all those steps were to occur without trouble, a purchase order would be created, and Long would order baseball team's caps. When the invoice, or bill, for the caps arrives, Long starts the invoice process to make sure the cap company is paid.

"That's a typical day," she said.

But Long is also a faculty manager — the go-to person for a home athletic contest. It means organizing the paperwork for the officials. Getting together any announcements that need to be given before the game and the rosters for

ROLE OF TRUSTED ASSISTANT WAS ONCE RESERVED FOR MEN

The first people to work in roles similar to jobs called 'secretaries' a few generations ago and adminstrative assistants today were educated, enslaved men in ancient Greece and Rome who would transcribe conversations and handle correspondence.

During the Renaissance and medieval periods, people in power relied on trusted clerks who often handled confidential matters on their behalf.

Although men had historically dominated the secretarial profession, things shifted during the Industrial Revolution. When men moved on to other roles in the vastly expanding job market, women took their places as office assistants.

Today, all of the administrative assistants in the district are women. Athletic Director Mike Babinec said although he's never really thought about it, it makes sense when you look into the traditional workplace roles of the past.

"I think obviously our society has improved in some ways, stayed the same in other ways, regressed in some ways," he said.

Long's thought was that maybe people feel that it is a more female role. "I never paid attention to it," she said.

Babinec said, "The only thing I can tell you is that whether Ms. Long was a guy or a girl, it's what she does and how she does that matters to me."

both teams. It means checking on security coverage and whether police need to be present.

She also stays after the game, addressing any needs the officials may have. Making sure the opposing team has what they need and ensuring that everyone leaves the game safely.

It's Long's practice to pay officials right away rather than waiting until the next day. She said that officials love to see her at the games because they know they will be paid before they get home. For her, this means just one less thing to worry about tomorrow.

When you add it all up, "that could be a 13-hour day," she said.

But Long's responsibilities were not always so expansive. She has worked in the district for 31 years, and she started part time at the administration building. After that, she moved to the high school where she became the athletic administrative assistant.

When she first joined the athletic department in 1996, it comprised five people. "There was the girls' athletic director, the boys' athletic director, and there were two faculty managers and then there was me," Long said. Today, there are only three employees: the athletic director, the assistant athletic director, and the athletic administrative assistant. Although there is now more responsibility among fewer people in the department, Long said it feels much more like a team.

While the Athletic Department staff has grown smaller during Long's career, the department itself is bigger than ever. "We have grown as far as sports," she said. The high school now offers 37 varsity sports. Men's and women's crew was added during the 1998-99 school year; men's rugby in 2007; women's rugby in 2015; men's volleyball in 2022-23; and men's and women's bowling in 2023-24.

In addition to handling communications, questions and purchases for those seven additional teams, Long is the men's bowling coach.

This year was Long's first season coaching bowling. She said that she used to compete in a bowling league, so when the position opened up, she applied. Long is the men's coach, and intervention specialist Brittany Billups is the women's coach. The two teams practice together at Roll House in Solon.

Long is also an adviser to BAGS — Black Athletes Giving Support. Created in 2023, The goal of the group is to empower black-identifying student-athletes to excel both athletically and academically. The group acknowledges that not every athlete is going to be a professional. "We try to take them to places that they can see there are other avenues that they can get involved in relative to sports," Long said.

BAGS members perform community service. Long said that it is important that students are able to do things outside of themselves. On one of their trips, members helped to set up homes for homeless people. They bagged food, vacuumed, mopped and painted.

Long is also an adviser for the Minority Achievement Committee Sister Scholars. The program focuses on promoting high achievement among Black and other minority students. Long and her co-adviser are completing their first year with MAC Sisters. She said their programming has focused on what the students want as the two ease into their roles. "We just kind of listen to, 'What do you guys want?' and then we start making it happen," she said.

Lucy Votruba, Vikki Long, Sofia Zucca, Nandita Sarma and Phoenix Florence at Pawnee Lanes in Bedford, Feb. 10. The bowling team had just lost to Bedford High School, but team spirit remained high as usual, head coach Vikki Long said. The Ohio High School Athletic Association recognized bowling in 2006, and other area schools had already created teams. When some students requested a bowling team, the Athletic Department investigated to determine interest, and SHHS bowling began. *Courtesy of Vikki Long*

> *I am blessed that I love my job. I love coming here and helping my team. There's nothing worse than waking up and going, 'Oh, my gosh,' and, 'I don't wanna go'. I feel the complete opposite.*
>
> Vikki Long

While spending time in the Athletic Department office, it's easy to notice the chemistry within the three-person team. "The three of us just get along," Babinec said. "I would say if you were to watch us interact with each other, it's just very organic, and we pick each other up in terms of what we do well and what the others may do well, and it just works."

One thing that helps it work is that all three members were at one point varsity coaches. "Mr. Enie was the varsity head coach for wrestling for, like, 18 years. Ms. Long was the varsity head coach for cheerleading for almost 23 years, and I was the varsity head coach for baseball for 15 years," Babinec said. "So, when we talk about knowing what it's like to work here and what we think you need to do to be successful here, we're coming at it with a lot of experience, and I think that helps us navigate all the challenges that take place."

"It gives us a real good understanding of what our coaches are going through, you know, and we can really help them," Long said.

Long said that when she was in high school, she didn't play sports; she was in the orchestra. But the high school's head cheerleading coach brought her on as an assistant, and after two years, Long took on the head coach role. She said that although she experienced a learning curve, she was able to use her dance experience to help her coaching. "It was pretty easy to, you know, fall into that role," Long said.

Although Long's job title is administrative assistant, she is a vital part of the athletic administration team. "We could not function without Ms. Long, for sure. In fact, we would probably both quit," Enie said.

"I trust Ms. Long with my life," Babinec said.

Long said she likes that her job stays in the shadows. "I don't really think about me," she said. Enie compared the athletic office to an offensive line in football, whose job is to protect the quarterback. Like the Athletic Department, the offensive line is extremely important, but is rarely recognized for its role. Long said she would rather be behind the scenes, clearing the path for the coaches and athletes.

"We are a great team; we always have each other's backs," she said.

Long said she feels very lucky to work in her role. "I am blessed that I love my job," she said. "I love coming here and helping my team. There's nothing worse than waking up and going, 'Oh, my gosh,' and, 'I don't wanna go,' " Long said. "I feel the complete opposite."

Long said people ask her if she ever thinks about retiring. "I don't," she said. "It's a feel-good space to me. I'm never going to retire."

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Macklin

Avril

EVELYN MACKLIN

JULIENNE AVRIL

Wren Macklin

Evelyn Macklin and Julienne Avril page through their novel in the Audrey Stout Learning Garden at the high school May 16. They wrote the novel for their personalized learning project at the Innovative Center for Personalized Learning during ninth and tenth grades.

Freedom to Choose Leads Juniors Down Publishing Path

IC students turn late-night texts, 40 pages of plans and 6 months of writing into a 300-page dystopian novel, "The Forgotten"

NATALIE BETTER, EMMA DEAN AND VEDA PANGLE
Journalism II Reporters

High school juniors Julienne Avril and Evelyn Macklin turned their passion for storytelling into a 115,000-word dystopian novel, "The Forgotten."

They met in sixth grade and became close friends shortly after seventh grade, when in-person learning resumed in 2022. Their shared love for novels would become a five-month writing feat two years later.

Avril and Macklin attended the Innovative Center for Personalized Learning as ninth graders. When school began, their former English teacher, Sariah Richardson, asked them what they wanted to do for their ninth-grade English curriculum.

Their answer: Write a book.

"From there, we chose a premise, and we just went for it," Avril said.

The district describes the IC as a "non-traditional high school experience." It offers students more flexibility in "when, where, how, and what they learn." Students are expected to spend only 51 percent of each school week on the campus in the basement of the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Center on Lee Road. There are no desks in the IC and no assigned seats.

As a project-based learning center, the IC encourages students' ideas, no matter how bold. "We could have the most outlandish ideas, and the teachers just ask, 'How are we going to do that?', " Macklin said.

After planning in a document that reached 40 pages, the duo began writing the manuscript on Sept. 14, 2023, about a month after 10th grade started.

Writers take different approaches to the novel-writing process. Some, like J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series, use charts and color-coded symbols. Others dive straight in. Using the Notes app on their iPhones, Macklin and Avril shared a detailed note that grew so long that it took five minutes to scroll through it. They spent most of the ninth grade adding to the notes page via text.

Their notes captured big plot points, favorite scenes and ideas that emerged from inspiration, but they said a lot of what they planned there never made the final cut.

"We were just bad at first. Not the writing, particularly, but there was a lot of useless information," Avril said. They erased "like a hundred thousand words or something" from their novel.

A 300-page book contains roughly 82,500 words. By writing 500 words per day, it's possible to hit that mark in about five and a half months. The process can be much longer, however; Rowling took seven years to write "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

Avril and Macklin finished their novel in just under six months, dividing the work between them.

Despite planning the story throughout ninth grade, they hadn't written anything through-

COLLABORATING TO CREATE A COVER THAT TELLS THE STORY

To create a cover for their novel, Avril and Macklin used a platform known as Fiverr, an online marketplace for freelance services.

This company connects specialists in various fields with individuals or businesses seeking services. Offerings range from AI strategies and financial education to life coaching and family genealogy.

The platform allows clients to browse portfolios, read reviews and select freelancers who best fit their project requirements. When it was time for this critical step in their project, Avril and Macklin sent a message to some cover artists through the platform. They took their time to explain the plot in detail.

This approach allowed them to find a clear vision of what they wanted for their book cover. Despite their enthusiasm, the journey was not without its challenges. Macklin said that some artists rejected their message, stating that the vision for the novel was "not for them." This feedback didn't stop Macklin and Avril. Instead, they viewed it as part of the creative process and continued their search.

After some trial and error, they connected with an artist who resonated with their vision and was also open to making revisions based on Arvil and Macklin's input.

After much back-and-forth communication, brainstorming and mutual adjustments, they arrived at a cover that captured the spirit of their story.

out ninth grade or the summer; it was a nudge from Ms. Richardson that got them back on track.

"She came to us and said, 'So when are you guys going to do this?'" Avril said.

That's when their writing took off. They would write anywhere from four to seven hours straight after finishing school work, or when inspiration struck. Still, they often procrastinated when they "weren't inspired," Macklin admitted.

Like most writers, their love for reading fueled their motivation. Some of their favorite books include dystopian titles such as "The Road" by Cormac McCarthy, "The Handmaid's Tale" by Margaret Atwood and "The Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines dystopia as "an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible." The genre often portrays terror, oppression and survival. The trio of dystopian books Macklin and Avril admire all depict survival amid societal collapse, and their novel follows suit.

Set in 2107, "The Forgotten" imagines a world ravaged by the fictional IHCD virus. Only five immune children remain, and the story depicts their journey across a deserted United States. They encounter runaway people, terrifying new creatures and startling discoveries about what's left of civilization.

"As the book follows children left behind in a barren world, 'The Forgotten' is a fitting title," Macklin said. "We continued to build a connection and meaning around it."

A book's title is one of the author's most important decisions. Studies show that shorter titles tend to grab readers' attention more effectively and allow for larger cover fonts and better marketability. Some writers choose a title before they begin writing and shape the story around it. Avril and Macklin had their title in mind from the beginning.

After a year of writing the story, it was time to create cover art. Avril and Macklin said they were intimidated. They aren't artists, and professional covers can cost anywhere from $300 to $2,000. They sought help from Fiverr, an online service that connects businesses and individuals with people who provide a wide range of digital services.

The financial hurdle vanished thanks to the Shaker Schools Foundation, which supports educational enrichment across the district, from preschool playgrounds to planetarium equipment. The foundation funded the novel's cover art and printing through an entrepreneurship grant, in partnership with the VEALE Foundation — established in 1964 to improve quality of life for others by making charitable donations in Northeast Ohio.

The grant allowed Avril and Macklin to focus on writing and editing. "Their business was being an author," Executive Director of the Shaker Schools Foundation Holly McCormick said.

Macklin researched printing vendors, compiled quotes and made a formal pitch to the foundation, which approved Macklin's proposal "because it aligned with Shaker's IB program," McCormick said. The foundation provided $308.04, which covered the purchase of 12 copies of "The Forgotten" from Barnes and Noble Press, plus the fees associated with the graphic designer they hired to design their cover art, Director of Development Laura Orazi said.

Cover art for "The Forgotten," Avril and Macklin's novel, shows the duo's early pen names a group of five silhouetted figures approaching a ruined city under a storm-lit sky — foreshadowing the eerieness, mystery, danger and fractured identities at the heart of the story. The Shaker Schools Foundation provided financial support for the writers as they worked with a designer to create the cover.

> *"I don't think there is any way we could have done this without the IC and their partnership with the foundation."*
>
> Julienne Avril

"We just paid the bill," Orazi said. For Avril and Macklin, the grant meant much more.

"I don't think there is any way we could have done this without the IC and their partnership with the foundation," Avril said. The funding turned their dream into a tangible reality.

By completing their book as high school students, Avril and Macklin join a small society of writers sooner than most. Only 3 percent of aspiring novelists finish their work. In the United States, nearly 50,000 writers are active, but 95-99 percent of submitted manuscripts are rejected. Authors on average reach the age of 36 before their first novels are published. Debut authors typically write 3.24 novels before publication.

The work isn't finished yet. They're still researching how to publish the book, and before publication, a manuscript must be edited thoroughly. Avril and Macklin's editor is IC English teacher Amanda Woolley.

"She's the best," they both said. "She read the whole thing and is just here for moral support. We can count on her for anything," Macklin added.

"The girls are fantastic writers," Woolley said. "There were not many revisions that needed to be made."

As a first-year teacher stepping into the IC's student-led atmosphere, Woolley was amazed by the scale of their project. "Two juniors wrote a book, and now they're trying to get it published? Incredible!" she said.

Though the manuscript was finished when Woolley arrived, she is supporting the girls through the publishing process, especially with query letters, which are a one-page, formal communication sent by a writer to a literary agent, magazine editor or publishing house. Traditional publishing involves querying agents, submitting a manuscript to publishers, refining the manuscript, and then marketing the book. This process can take a year or more.

Watching Avril and Macklin work inspired Woolley to push other students to "think big."

"The Forgotten" was edited for more than a year. Their final draft was completed on Feb. 19, 2024. As Avril and Macklin neared the end of the writing process, burnout set in.

"You just have to take time away from your work," Avril said. "Sitting down and looking at the bullet points we had to fit into a whole chapter was hard, and sometimes we just didn't want to do it."

Writer's block, a frustrating yet common challenge, stems from fear: of failure, of vulnerability, or simply not knowing what comes next. When that fear creeps in, Avril and Macklin remind themselves of something simple but powerful. "We think about the sheer variety of published books out there and remind ourselves that reading is highly subjective, and we will find our niche," Avril said.

Still, they found editing "boring."

"I'd give anything to be back to writing because editing is so much worse," Avril said. The two are already eager to start their next writing project.

For now, Avril and Macklin are focused on what they've already accomplished.

"It is something we are both unbelievably proud of," they said, "and an accomplishment we will carry with us for the rest of our lives, no matter where we end up after high school or what we might go on to achieve."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When Julienne Avril and Evelyn Macklin began writing the novel, they weren't sure if they wanted to be recognized for it—at least, not right away.

"We originally chose pen names to keep some distance," they said. "It felt a little strange to imagine people we knew reading it and immediately connecting it back to us."

The initials matched their real ones, but otherwise, the names were simply ones they liked. Those pseudonyms even made it onto the early cover designs shared with artists.

But as the publishing journey evolved, so did their perspective. "We realized we were proud of what we'd made—and we wanted to own that," they said.

The final decision? To step into the light with stylized versions of their real names: J.F. Avril and E.B. Macklin. The book cover will be updated before release, reflecting that shift in ownership and pride.

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JOHN HORN

Head Coach Danny Young, Miles Shelton, John Horn, Assistant Coach Adrian Lewis, Landon Future, Gejaunis Sanders and Mek Black pose for a senior picture following their 72-67 defeat of Massillon Washington in the District Final March 1 at Wooster High School . Following his transfer from Benedictine High School to SHHS for his senior season, Horn was named All District 2nd team, 1st team All-Conference and All-Ohio Honorable Mention.

Martinique Future

Senior Transfer Helps Basketball Team Recoup Season

EZRA EPSTEIN AND TRISTAN WESTLUND
Position

It was summer of 2023. John Horn, a 6-foot-3-inch sophomore forward, had just finished playing in an AAU game at Case Western Reserve University. Longtime SHHS varsity basketball coach Danny Young approached him.

It was the first time Young tried to convince the sophomore star to transfer from Benedictine, and join the Raiders. “Coach Young saw me at some tournaments and I could tell he liked how I played,” Horn said.

Young envisioned Horn fitting into the Raider squad due to his size, shooting ability and the experience he could bring, but Horn didn’t make the move that year.

During Horn’s 2024 junior season at Benedictine, he averaged seven points and five rebounds for the 10-13 Bengals, who were knocked out in the first round of the playoffs.

“I met his mother and talked about potentially transferring,” said Young. “Eventually she allowed him to come.”

Horn transferred for the 2024-25 school year, his senior year. He followed his friend, and former Benedictine teammate, R.J. Thomas, who came to Shaker as a senior in 2023-24.

Horn said that Thomas’ decision to transfer influenced him. “After the season I would come to Shaker basketball games to watch RJ play, and that is where we [Horn and Young] connected. He [Young] was talking to my mom, and at the end of the day, we made the decision to transfer,” Horn said.

According to Horn, the choice was mutual.

> *“It was a winning culture. Coaches pushed me to be better every day and never settled for nothing less.”*
>
> John Horn

“My mom was on board with it and she knew what Coach Young wanted to do,” Horn said.

Horn said Young called and texted and eventually won him over. “The coaching and culture was better at Shaker,” he said. “I wasn’t involved as much as I would’ve liked [at Benedictine]. Also, the chemistry wasn’t there between our team.”

Horn said the Shaker team culture was different. “It was a winning culture. Coaches pushed me to be better everyday and never settled for nothing less,” he said.

The coaching and culture at SHHS that led Horn to transfer also bolstered the team’s late-season success. The Raiders started 1-10, but won seven of their last 11 games, including two overtime wins and a defeat of St. Vincent St. Mary – the first of Young’s Shaker tenure.

Horn said losing early helped the team relax. “All the pressure was taken off our shoulders and we could just go out there and play. We came together as a team and started to really play for one another,” Horn said.

Now, as his senior year comes to a close, Horn can proudly talk about leading the 2025 men’s basketball team in points per game as they reached a regional final appearance, the school’s first since 2020.

“It felt good leading the team in points per game. My guards were always looking for me, and I always tried my best to shoot at all times,” Horn said.

The Raiders’ triumphs continued until the regional final. Shaker unexpectedly reached the district final, defeating Massillon Washington 54-50 and bringing a district championship to Shaker, only its 7th under Young and 13th in SHHS history. Horn contributed five points and four rebounds, including a momentum-swinging three late in the second half.

Next, they beat Brecksville-Broadview Heights in overtime in the regional semifinals before losing in the regional final to Massillon Perry. “It for sure hurt to lose like that, but I knew how hard we fought to get there and I was proud of what me and the team accomplished,” Horn said.

Off of the court, Horn strives for harmony in the locker room. “I’m just trying to help everyone get along with each other and respect each other, so the chemistry of the team keeps rising,” Horn said.

Junior teammate Jacire Eaddy said that Horn also carries himself well. “He demands respect,” Eaddy said.

Eaddy said Horn’s energy propels the team. “If John plays well, the rest of the team also feeds off that and plays well,” he said. This spark was evident when Horn scored 28 points including seven threes in a comeback win versus Rocky River Feb. 18.

Academics are also very important to Horn. According to Young, for Horn’s mom, a large part of her son transferring to SHHS was that he continued to maintain good grades. Horn has fulfilled that request by maintaining a straight-A average and plans to attend Central State University this fall.

“When I finally made the move out, I felt like it was the right decision for my basketball career,” he said. It was, he said, “my best decision that I ever made.”

SILAS JENSEN

Freshman Silas Jensen controls the ball as defenders close in. He scored 20 goals as a freshman, and eight in one game. The college showcase that Jensen is a part of, the Umbro Showcase, plays three or four tournaments during the summer that are held in various states and Canada. At these tournaments, college coaches come to watch players as potential recruits.
Jensen said he feels nervous about his showcase opportunity and will probably handle the stress by socializing.
"I don't know what's really going on. I just got to roll with it until I find out some way," he said,

Paul Woodhams

Danish Freshman Sees Goal, and U.S. Culture, Clearly

VARNIKA TAKHI AND RYENN MORGAN
Journalism II Reporters

Silas Jensen, a Danish-speaking freshman, has caught the attention of college soccer programs.

This season, he scored 20 goals, and in a single game, he scored eight. He is also one of the two freshmen chosen to be a part of an 18-player college showcase team.

Jensen said his father got him started in soccer. When Silas was 4, his dad took him to the beach. "I remember my dad giving me a beach ball to play with when I was super young so I could get a feel of it," Jensen said. He said he found it pretty fun to kick the ball around.

When he was younger, Jensen said, he mostly played in the backyard and scored a lot of touch downs, but not the American kind. In soccer, "getting touches down" refers to when players maintain possession of the ball and slow down its movement by using small touches instead of using quick, large touches that cause players to lose control. Jensen said that if you are good at getting tons of touches down, it helps you become a better player.

When he was in eighth grade, Jensen moved to the Ohio Premier Futball Club to prepare for playing soccer in high school. Jensen plays both as a striker and a midfielder, who is responsible for scoring and connecting the defense and attack. He met two of his teammates and friends, sophomores Johannes Hagenaars and Michael Coxon, in the clubs he played for. Hagenaars plays for the SHHS varsity team. Coxon has been the captain of the JV team.

Hagenaars said Jensen is very energetic."He always wants to play, and he's always trying to score," he said

> *"I'm just hoping I can get as much done, like get clips in, and show them what I can do against older people.*
>
> Silas Jensen

Coxon said Jensen is friendly and welcoming. Jensen said he makes an effort.

"I try to be as polite as possible," said Jensen, "but sometimes if they really mess up hard, then it can be hard to keep your tone down."

Recently, Jensen was named to a college showcase team called the Umbro Cup. He is one of only two freshmen on the team of 18 people, and was chosen from a group of about 50 eligible players. Most Shaker players who make the team are juniors. "Probably the largest milestone I've had so far," Jensen said.

Jensen values his Danish identity and heritage. Danish people are from Denmark, located in the northern part of Europe, called Scandinavia. His parents were born there and immigrated to the United States in 2001 for work.

Jensen said he sees a difference in how Denmark and the United States play soccer. "[Denmark's] a lot more focused on technique," Jensen said, unlike the United States. "Over here is a lot more ego," he said. "Everything is just, 'So, how am I the best on this field?' " In Denmark, a teamwork-based approach is more common, according to Jensen.

He speaks Danish at home. "I like the language a lot. It sounds cool," he said. He he appreciates the Danish culture, which, he said, emphasizes loving as many people as possible and encourages remaining flexible. "Just roll with it, roll with the current," he said.

Jensen described the food in Denmark as healthier than in the United States. "It's not as processed," he said. "You wouldn't use aspartame like they do here." Aspartame is an artificial sweetener used in products such as diet drinks, ice creams and gum. "Every food is more organic," he said.

Jensen's favorite Danish dishes from are stjerneskud, and flæskesteg. He said stjerneskud was his grandfather's favorite meal. It's an open-faced seafood sandwich made with cod, lemon, shrimp and remoulade, which resembles tartar sauce. Flæskesteg, a Danish roast pork, is more of a holiday dish.

Though Jensen loves his Danish identity, he prefers not to move to Denmark. "It's a different type of culture over there," Jensen said. Jensen said that America is too great for a single culture. "You can drive three hours away from here, and people will do things completely differently," he said. "You got regions in this place. You don't really have too many regions in Denmark."

Because his family includes immigrants, some challenges have arisen since the election of Donald Trump, who campaigned on mass deportation. Concerns that legal immigrants without criminal records are being detained have increased. Jensen said his family has talked about whether they would move back to Denmark. "There are a lot more opportunities here," he said.

Moving would waste the college showcase tryout and impact him socially. "Finding new friends is definitely harder when you're in high school. So, if I were to move there, it would be a little bit hard to come back from it, " he said.

"We should probably stay and see what happens."

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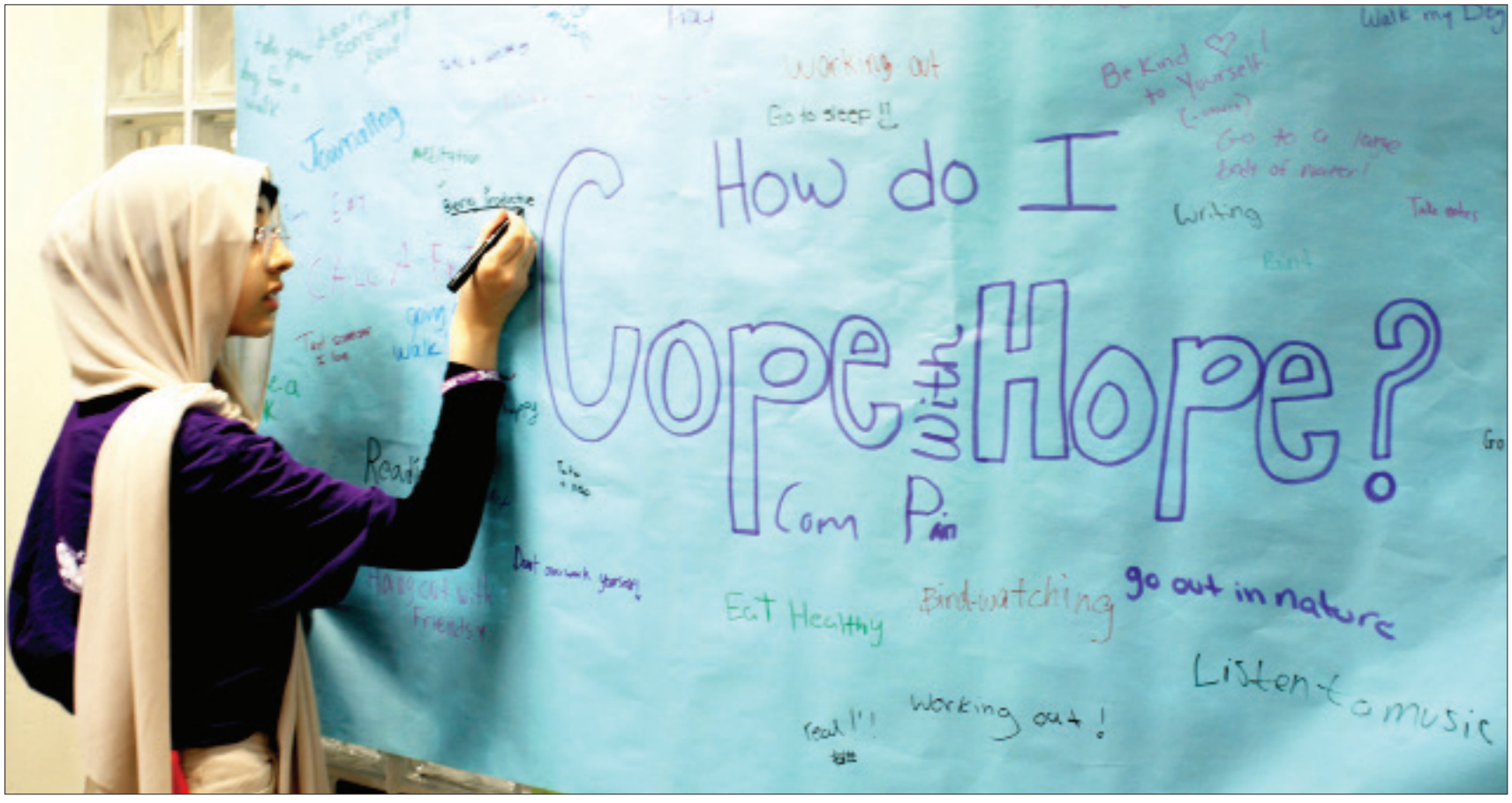
SALMA MARZOUK

Freshman Salma Marzouk, who came to the United States with her family from the United Arab Emirates when she was 11, adds to a banner about mental health posted in the cafeteria. Marzouk skipped the seventh grade and is taking College Credit Plus courses. Her mother is not surprised. "I've never been shocked that she's very accelerated or had any doubts, I always knew she could do anything she set her mind to, but I've always been impressed," she said. "She's curious, hardworking, and determined."



Freshman Seizes Every Opportunity to Learn and Lead

After a move to the United States for better education, Salma Marzouk isn't wasting any time making the most of it

EMMA BARKER
Journalism II Reporter

Salma Marzouk and her mother were sitting on the couch, eating lunch, when her mother brought up the idea of switching grades.

Markouk's teacher had suggested advancement due to her high MAP test scores, and while against the idea at first, she didn't refuse.

"I took a bite of my smoothie and just rolled with it," she said.

For Marzouk, a freshman, school has always been a top priority. An immigrant from the United Arab Emirates, she skipped the seventh grade and is taking three college courses while dedicating as much time as possible to continue her passion: giving back to her community.

"Taking these classes doesn't feel like anything out of the ordinary. I feel like I'm just a normal person with a normal schedule, just with less free time," Marzouk said. "Other people have it worse than me, and I'm grateful I can still manage my life with everything I have."

In addition, Marzouk is a member of seven clubs this year: Science Olympiad, Academic Challenge, Model UN, MAC Sister Scholars, Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, Youth Ending Hunger and ACE Mentoring.

Her mother, who asked not to be identified by name, said her daughter's skills extend beyond academics. "She's not just smart; she's kind and passionate. She cares a whole lot about making a difference and always tries to do her best, not just for herself but for others," she said.

Marzouk earned more than 200 community service hours over the past two years at MedWish Medworks and 65 hours for CareForBrains. MedWish Medworks provides free medical, dental, vision and women's health clinics, repurposed medical supplies, and resources to anyone in need.

Salma described some of her work at a Medworks dental clinic. "I greet the patients, guide them, and check paperwork. For walk-ins, I call out names and register people," Marzouk said. "After breaks, I help with the food bank outside and hand out meals to people. When the clinics finish, I assist with cleaning up."

CareForBrains is an online volunteer program that works to support people struggling with mental health conditions. Marzouk said she loves helping out and constantly checks for CareForBrains assignments on Google Classroom. She completes assignments for community service hours. "I've made inspirational quote cards, posters about where to go for help, and presentations about mental health," she said. "I just open a poster on Canva, put a quote, and cite my source, then move on to the next one."

Last year, Marzouk earned the Irwin Barnett Memorial Award for Outstanding Citizenship and Service. "I've learned a lot from volunteering, and I really like being able to make

Journalism II Reporter Zoe Griest contributed to this report.

COLLEGE CREDIT PLUS COURSES CAN REDUCE COST, STRESS OF COLLEGE

College credit plus courses are required by the state of Ohio and allow students grades seven to 12 to take college courses for free.

First offered in 2015, CCP enables students to attain credits that can be applied to high school and college. CCP prepares students, potentially leading to a quicker high school graduation, and a cheaper college experience. According to the Ohio law, "All public secondary schools and all public colleges shall participate in CCP."

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute attributed the rise of CCP to the state's desire to "promote rigorous academic pursuits" early on in a student's academic journey, and to "address low student participation in Ohio's original Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program," which was created in 1985 for grades 10-12.

Some CCP courses are also taught at the high school. Marzouk thinks CCP is a good opportunity. "I think everyone should take it. It's not well-known, but it should be," she said.

Marzouk's CCP courses take up to two hours for each project, but Marzouk knows her work will pay off. "It saves time in college. I'm positive I'll have more on my shoulders when I grow up," she said. Now, when I'm a kid, I don't have much responsibility. I push myself as much as I can so I don't regret it."

change. It's really nice to see my work is paying off," she said.

Bill Scanlon, her science teacher said Marzouk is very focused on taking care of other people, "which is one of the best qualities anyone can have."

Once a month, Salma and her aunt spend time together volunteering. "That's the reason I love it so much," she said. "Sometimes my brother comes, too, and it's really fun. After moving from the UAE, volunteering also helped me make friends. I can work with so many like-minded people."

Before moving to the United States, Marzouk and her family resided in Dubai, UAE. She recalls a few main differences between Dubai and the United States. "The buildings there were a lot larger and organized" in Dubai, she said. "The area I lived in was quiet and clean. Some places are prettier than others. There's a reason it's a tourist place."

Marzouk notices differences in schooling, the weekly schedule being one of the biggest. "In the UAE, we had school Sundays through Thursdays, and school ended 20 minutes earlier," she said. "We also didn't have any homework, and there was a test almost every day."

The UAE academic system is relatively new, and in recent years, it has begun to embrace technology and innovation.

"The main reason my family came to the U.S. was for better education, and I feel like it is better, in a way," said Marzouk, who was 11 years old when her family immigrated. "There's more opportunities."

"I've forgotten most of it," she said of her life in the UAE, "and that's pretty sad. It was also really emotional leaving everything behind. I had lots of friends that I couldn't talk to anymore, and most of them I've known since I was young."

Moving to a new place and getting into the flow of things was challenging. "I had come in in the middle of the year, and the classes were already up and going," Marzouk said.

She didn't stay in seventh grade for long, though. After taking an IQ test and tests in science, grammar, composition and math, and attending three meetings, Marzouk was deemed eligible for a grade jump. "I didn't even realize there was something called grade skipping until seventh grade," she said, "so that's when I did it."

Her mother noticed her daughter's academic interest early. "Even from a young age, Salma has had an eagerness to understand the world," she said. Marzouk has always had a quick mind when it comes to learning new things. This was especially clear to Salma's mother when Marzouk started learning how to play the violin. "I noticed how patient and determined she was to master each note. It was clear that she genuinely loved and appreciated every step of learning," she said.

While Marzouk does school work from both the high school and Tri-C, where she takes her online college classes, she said she has no special method for doing assignments other than researching and putting words and pictures on slides or paper. "The only way to get through something is to just do it, and worrying won't get you anywhere" she said. "I redo any homework I have in case I don't understand a topic, and almost always, I order my assignments and tests from the closest due date to the farthest due date and work on it from there."

One of Salma Marzouk's favorite memories from her life in Dubai is riding a camel. "It was like riding a horse," she said. "It's very bouncy, and you have to get used to it. I didn't ride it for long, but I remember how soft the camel was." *Courtesy of Salma Marzouk*

> *Taking these classes doesn't feel like anything out of the ordinary. I mean, I feel like I'm just a normal person with a normal schedule, just with less free time. Other people have it worse than me.*
>
> Salma Marzouk

"She works hard and is a leader," said Scanlon

Even with all the effort she makes to prepare for her future, Marzouk said she is unsure about what college she will attend, what classes she will take or what she will do as an adult. "I discover new things every day that I like, and I don't think I'm in a good position to choose what I want to do until I'm older and more certain," Marzouk said.

Despite claiming that she doesn't manage her time well, Marzouk keeps a strict schedule that consists of little to no free time, including around eight hours of homework on the weekends and a few hours each weekday night.

"I barely find time to do anything except finish my missing assignments. It gets a lot better on Sundays, when I can catch up and have some time for myself, but my stress level is still pretty high," she said. To minimize stress, Marzouk keeps an efficient routine. "I usually wake up around 7:30, get ready and head to school. Then I stay for clubs and get home. When I'm really tired, I take a nap, wake up, do some homework, and go to sleep at around 10-11 p.m., and then repeat."

Doing what has to be done as quickly as possible is another strategy. "It helps me keep up with my responsibilities because I'm not stressing about it anymore," she said.

When she does have free time, Marzouk enjoys spending it with family and friends. They watch shows and play games together, however, some of the best times they have are "just sitting there, playing with my little brother, or talking with my parents," Marzouk said.

Being someone her parents can rely on in the future is something she looks forward to. "I really want to help my parents and make them proud. I want to get a good job when I grow up and have a good life," she said. "It will all be worth it when I get into college."

Over the years, she has recalled a motto that helps keep her going. "Everything happens for a reason," she said. "Some things you might think are bad could be the reason you live for another day. Some things you think are good, sometimes just aren't."

"Whatever happens, happens, and you need to learn to live with it."

While skipping a grade, taking college classes and volunteering, Marzouk has acquired a life lesson, too.

"I learned that good things almost never come easily," she said, "and the only way to get them is to be really determined about it and work really hard for it."

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MATTHEW KLODOR

Matthew Klodor teaches eighth-grade students at the Northwest Ordinance during Individuals and Societies class in a classroom trailer at the middle school this year. Sixth graders moved to the middle school this year from Woodbury Elementary School before renovations began there. Fifth graders moved to the district's elementary schools. Klodor intended to be an English teacher, but once he started teaching history, 10 years ago, he made a different plan. INS class addresses U.S. history.

Courtesy of Matthew Klodor

Making Some Part of Middle School Fun With History

KARSYN MILLER
Journalism II Reporter

Most students don't expect to leave history class laughing.

But for the eighth graders at Shaker Heights Middle School, that's just a regular day with their teacher.

"History can most definitely be a dry subject; some students can think it's boring," said Matthew Klodor, an eighth-grade Individuals and Society teacher completing his 10th year.

However, students in Klodor's class tell a different story. Eloise Dus-Jastremsky said she enjoys history. "Mr. Klodor's teaching impacts me in a very positive way. He's very good at simplifying a topic or putting it into words I can understand, so I can get the gist of what we are learning about," said the eighth grader.

Transitioning from elementary to middle school can be a difficult and boring experience, especially when being introduced to hard topics such as history. Klodor knows this better than most. Whether through chants, costumes, games or jokes, his goal is to make learning memorable. "Repetition can be a fun way to engage students," Klodor said. "So either it's like a phrase or something ridiculous — the point is to get it to stick."

Cate Connell, another eighth-grade student, said Klodor makes learning fun with online resources such as Gimkits, which teachers can use to create review games that students can play at their own pace using their Chromebooks.

Klodor also doesn't shy away from difficult topics. "I think building that relationship and that trust with students is probably the most important thing for when we get to those harder conversations," Klodor said.

> *"I was absolutely blown away by how much I love teaching history.*
>
> Matthew Klodor

"We talk about things that matter," Dus-Jastremsky said.

Part of what makes Klodor unique is that teaching history wasn't his original plan. "I always thought I was going to be an English teacher," he said.

"They hired me as a history teacher, and I thought to myself, 'I'll try the history thing' — and I was absolutely blown away by how much I love teaching history."

To keep students focused and enjoying themselves, he uses pop culture references, reenactments, games like Gimkit and Blooket and even silly rhymes or nicknames to help students remember historical events and figures.

"It's not just random fun," said Connell. "Everything he does connects back to what we're learning. It's smart."

When students feel overwhelmed, especially during tough units, Klodor encourages them with humor and patience. "He doesn't just care about teaching," said Dus-Jastremsky. "He cares about us."

That care shows up in small ways — checking in when a student looks upset, giving reminders about missing assignments without making a big deal, or just asking students how their weekend was — moments that build trust and make students feel seen.

"He makes it OK to not know everything," said Connell. "He wants us to think for ourselves, not just memorize stuff."

Matthew Klodor and students gather in front of the Washington Monument in Washington D.C. during the annual eighth-grade trip. Teachers and eighth graders take a three-day trip to the nation's capitol every spring in late April or early May. *Matthew Klodor*

RYAN LENAHAN

Senior forward Ryan Lenahan skates down the ice at J.M. Bartley Arena, where the Raiders defeated the Meadville (PA) Bulldogs 5-2, with Lenahan totaling three of his 108 career points. The varsity hockey team finished with a record of 16-18-2, with their season coming to an end in the third round of the state playoffs. Lenahan was named Raiders' Offensive MVP and received the Don Hicks Most Valuable Player award as well as all Ohio honorable mention.

Matty Moore

2 Injured Knees Can't Stop Successful Senior Season

DYLAN ERSEPKE AND MAX BROKAW
Position

After the 2024 lacrosse season, Ryan Lenahan faced a challenge.

Pain due to patellar tendinitis and a torn meniscus in both knees led him to undergo surgery — just four weeks before his senior hockey season began.

"What happened to my knees is definitely a setback," he said, "but there isn't anything I can do except to keep going and fighting."

Lenahan's lacrosse journey began in high school. He was a baseball player, but stopped playing in 2023 to be with his friends on the lacrosse team, eventually becoming a top goaltender in the state. He was on the All-Ohio Watchlist going into this season.

In 2024, as a junior, Lenahan started in goal and led the Raiders to their first win in 20 years over their biggest rival, University School. He said that is his top high school moment. "My favorite memory was beating US in lacrosse. At the time, they were number one in the state," Lenahan said.

After his junior season concluded, Lenahan started to experience knee pain. After the surgery, he had to rebuild his knee strength. "Physical therapy and icing," he said. "I still feel the pain, so it's challenging to push through, but consistency has helped me recover."

Despite injured knees, Lenahan had a breakout hockey season and reached 100 career points. He ended his senior season with 23 goals, 39 assists and 62 total points. He was nominated to the Great Lakes Hockey All-Ohio League Second Team, and he earned the Doug Hicks Most Valuable Player award, an honor given to the most valuable player on the SHHS hockey team. "I felt great that all the hard work paid off," Lenahan said.

> *"When Ryan talked to the team in the locker room, we knew we were going to come back and win.*
>
> Isaac Luzar

Head ice hockey coach Matt Bartley said Lenehan has "good hands and vision and sees the ice well." Freshman hockey player Isaac Luzar said he envies Lenahan's skills. "He is very good with the puck, and I'd love to have his puck control. He always knows where to be," he said.

Lenahan was elected captain by his teammates and coaches. "Ryan tries to make sure that everyone on the team sets goals for themselves and that they follow them," sophomore Colin Arth said. Bartley said people look up to him. "He has done a good job of pushing himself and others around him to be better," Bartley said.

During the second round of the state playoffs, the Raiders trailed Hudson 1-0 at the end of the first period. In the locker room, Lenahan gave a speech that fired up the team. The Raiders came back to win, 7-4. "In moments like those, when the season is on the line, you need your captain to motivate you and bring you up," Luzar said.

"When Ryan talked to the team in the locker room, we knew we were going to come back and win."

Bartley said Lenahan's personality enhances his leadership. "He's a funny and goofy kid and is generally one who does something and can laugh it off, which is definitely a good skill to have, and a skill that people wish they could have," Bartley said.

In the offseason after his junior year, he improved his game by playing on one of the best club lacrosse teams in the state, Resolute Ohio. In the 2025 lacrosse season, the Raiders ran a zone defense, which packs them into the middle of the field, allowing the opposing team to shoot from further out, relying on Lenahan to make saves. "Lenny has great hand-eye coordination and quick hands. He also does a great job of positioning himself in the cage and baiting opponents to make them shoot where he wants them to," head lacrosse coach Will Talbot-Shere said.

The Raiders faced the Hoover Vikings, the fourth-ranked team in Ohio, at home in their final regular-season game May 13. Lenahan's 17 saves helped them defeat the Vikings, 10-8. In the past 10 years, Shaker has only beaten Hoover once, in 2019.

At the conclusion of the regular season, Lenahan was awarded the Position Player of the Year, recognizing him as the top goalie in the region.

With all of Lenahan's success in sports, he has some unique pre- and post-game routines. Before games, Lenahan said that he listens to Marvin Gaye because it calms him and relieves his nerves. After games, Lenahan loves to treat himself to a bowl from Chipotle with rice, honey chicken, cheese, lettuce and guacamole.

He plans to attend Indiana University next year to study business.

Said Lenehan, "It's been a long journey with a lot of memories, and I'm sad it has to come to an end, but I'm excited for what the future has to bring."

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MYRIAM NEIL

As administrative assistant for the IB Programme at the high school, Miriam Neil has created in her office a "Wall of Soon-To-Be-Famous Shalker IB Alum." Fluent in English, Spanish, German and French, she has previously appeared in The Shakerite in a story about the lunchtime language tables she established in the high school cafeteria. In that story, she was described as someone who "breaks down language barriers." When she arrived in America in 1985, she sought community among "those that embrace the best parts of America," its "welcoming" and "inclusive" side.

Shakerite Photo

Using Her Experience Abroad to Nurture Community

An immigrant, and once an exchange student herself, Neil knows the value of inclusivity and strives to foster it at the high school

RUTHIE FOREMAN
Journalism II Reporter

Enter the SHHS office, go to the far left side, move past Mr. Dubsky making a hall sweep announcement, and then turn left again.

On your right will be the office of Myriam Neil, the administrative assistant for the International Baccalaureate Programme, an advanced education track that urges students to study abroad. Neil is a key cog in Shaker's IB wheel. She helps recruit students for the Diploma Programme in grades 11 and 12, and guides them through their IB schedule and experience.

Decorating her office are trinkets from around the world; some are from her own travels, some are gifts from students who traveled. Also lining her office walls are pictures of past and present IB Diploma Programme classes. She refers to it as the "Wall of Soon-To-Be-Famous Shaker IB Alumni."

Why does she keep this wall?

It's so Neil can track all of her students and their futures. She has been adding to it since 2012. It's also a resource for students who go abroad. If a student from a previous DP class is in England, for example, and a current IB student plans to go, Neil will help them arrange a meeting.

Neil emphasizes creating connections with and between her students. "I want people to come to Shaker, and have a community," Neil said.

When a student from abroad comes to Shaker, she makes it her job to introduce them to the other students; especially those who have also immigrated. She runs the Global Friendship Club, which invites foreign students in SHHS to activities that celebrates different cultures.

"Because I was so impacted by my studies abroad, [I work] to make it the same for my students," Neil said.

Neil herself is an immigrant from Southern France. Although many immigrants come to America from Europe, French immigrants have historically comprised a minority of American immigrants in comparison to countries such as Germany or Russia.

Her journey to Shaker started in her German class, when her teacher saw a spark for learning inside her. By the teacher's suggestion, Neil was on track for an exchange program in Germany.

At the time, Southern France was still healing from WWII, so when Neil introduced her new German friends to her family, she could sense they felt strange about it. But this did not discourage her.

After high school, she continued her studies in Germany to focus on law. And when she met her American boyfriend, she decided to move with him to the United States to marry. By 1985, Neil had successfully immigrated, married both civilly and religiously, and obtained her permanent resident card — more commonly referred to as a green card — which enables

A GLIMPSE INTO LANGUAGE TABLES' EFFECT ON COLLEGE STUDENTS

Language Tables are a common college resource that can help students deepen their understanding of a language.

Students will gather during lunch, or after school, to share food and ideas in a language they are studying. By conversing, the students deepen their grasp of the language's systems and vocabulary, two things that might be harder to understand in a typical language class.

They also help students from other countires. International students can feel isolated in their new homes due to the language barriers. These tables can help to remedy that issue. International students — who might already be familiar with the language — can learn more about their peers through something familiar in an new place.

The tables also prepare young people for their future. It's often that a person is studying a language in order to later visit that country.

When a group of students from the University of Nebraska visited Italy after practicing Italian at the tables, they said that they felt more comfortable communicating with Italians. Additionally, the University of Nebraska offers tables in the Student Union food court. This practice adds a deeper sense of community because the tables are located in a space specifically made for students to come share their thoughts about campus life.

working and living in America permanently.

But when Neil came to America, she didn't search for other French immigrants to form a community. Instead, she sought out immigrants from everywhere. "I looked for those who embraced the best parts of America," Neil said, referring to what she described as the "welcoming" and "inclusive" side of American culture.

"These were simpler times," Neil said, reflecting on her American immigration process. Since then, the US government has made the process increasingly more difficult. In the 1990s, acts like the Immigration Responsibility Act made borders and admission requirements stricter.

And after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, America enforced the Homeland Security Act, which introduced things such as ICE. According to the ICE website, they use their congress given authority "to promote homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement." ICE has been known to use violent ways to seize illegal immigrants from their homes.

But Neil didn't endure any of these obstacles. She travelled all over the United States. From Pennsylvania to Oregon, Michigan, Massachusetts, Toledo, and of course Cleveland. "Shaker is the cherry on the cake of my learning and for who I have become," Neil said.

Neil is a passionate Shaker Heights rep. Although she believes she has "drunk the Kool-Aid," in this case the fruity punch is not dangerous. Instead it's a source of community and friendship. Neil started her Shaker journey as a parent. She put her children through the Shaker schools, because as she lived in America she heard great things about Shaker Heights.

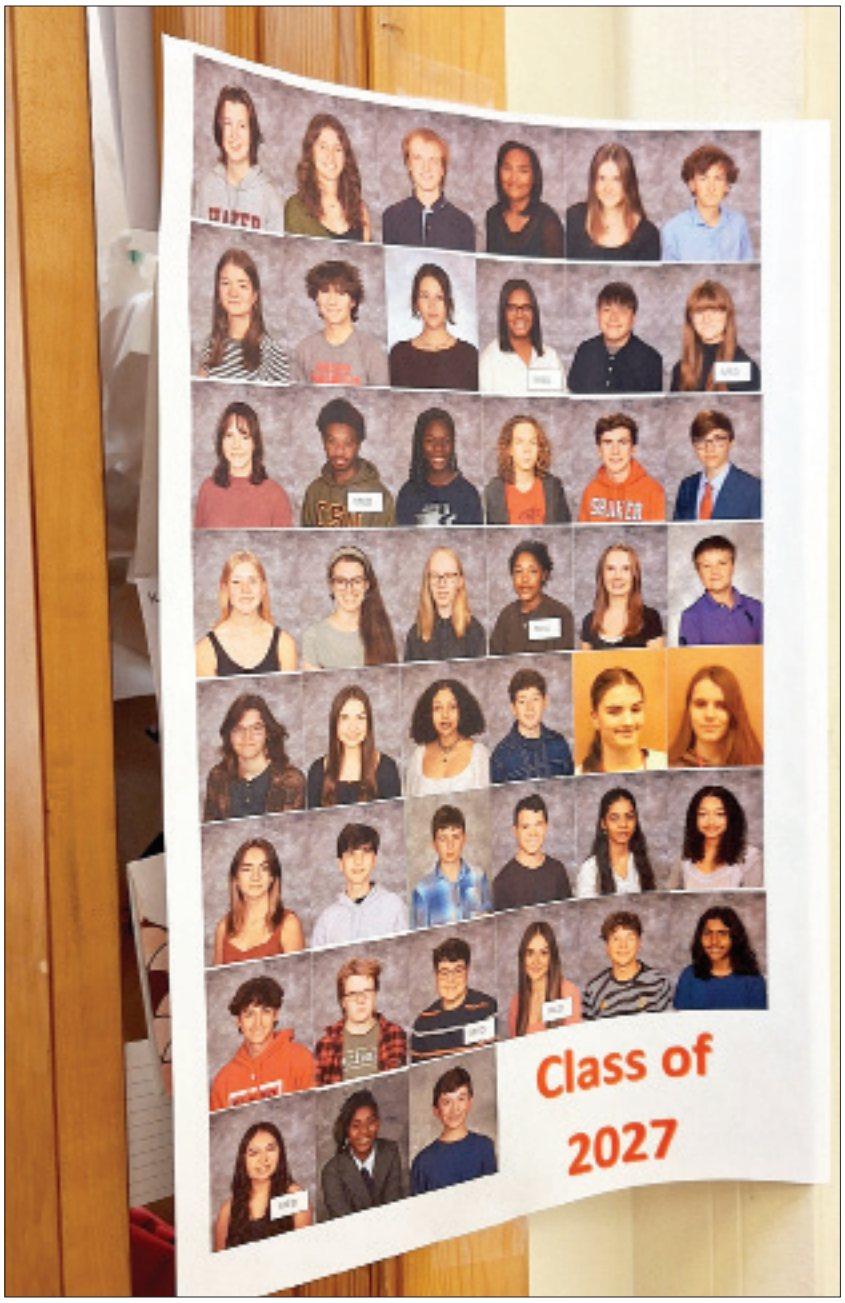
"I've travelled all around," Neil said. But compared to those experiences, she thinks that Shaker Heights is one of the "most honorable" places, based on the community's commitment to bring diverse people together to live and learn. And as Neil watched her children go through the schools, she began to feel a "great debt to the teachers."

"Life is never straight; there are always dips and hills," Neil said. But she said that teachers at Shaker helped her children with these.

Shaker Heights was founded in 1911, a unique addition to America, because it was one of the first suburbs. Although Shaker now has a reputation for being extremely diverse, it wasn't always like this. In fact, when a Black physician named E. A. Bailey moved into a Shaker house in 1925, his home was attacked with bricks and gunshots.

According to Case Western's Encyclopedia of Cleveland, 1970s Shaker was "overwhelmingly white." But there were always causes for race integration. In 1957, the Ludlow Community Association was formed to promote assimilation of Black residents, and to ease the tension growing in white residents. Although it ended in 1959, other groups in Shaker have appeared, with similar goals in mind. Neil is a prominent example of some of the people in Shaker carrying on this legacy.

Eventually, Neil found herself situated in the main office, organizing AP and SAT registration as well as assisting in assigning substitute teachers. Soon the district offered her an administrative position dedicated to the IB program, and she has stuck with it ever since.



A panel of school pictures of the IB Diploma Progamme class of 2027 hangs outside of Miriam Neil's office in the Guidance Department. Neil is administrative assistant for the program. *Ruthie Foreman*

> "Because I was so impacted by my studies abroad, [I work] to make it the same for my students."
>
> Myriam Neil

Neil works closely with Laura Hartel, the IB Diploma Programme coordinator. Together, the two work to make class schedules for IB students, and make sure that they can do everything they want and need to do within the IB curriculum.

Hartel describes Neil as "passionate."

"Her kids did this program," said Hartel, "what she saw in them made her so passionate." Hartel also said that Neil is the definition of a "global student." Meaning, she is willing to learn about diverse cultures and experiences. Hartel attributes this attitude to Neil's travels all over the world. She also praises Neil for her ability to connect with students.

"The relationships she builds with students are so tight," Hartel said, "And she doesn't even have a classroom!"

Lola Coutelen, a sophomore, said that Neil is "definitely" one of the adults she is closest with at the high school. Coutelen was born in Paris, but has lived in Shaker Heights since seventh grade. Neil was the first person she met in Shaker. She then introduced Coutelen and her family to other immigrant families at a mixer.

Neil remains close to Coutelen's family. They invite each other over for dinner, and Neil might watch over Coutelen if her parents are out of town.

Coutelen described Neil as "happy" and "always wanting to help."

"Whenever I see her she's always smiling," Coutelen said,"I feel I can come to her and ask her anything."

Much like Hartel, Coutelen also sees the things Neil does for students and is very proud of her efforts to make them feel welcome. "What she is doing for exchange students is so good," Coutelen said.

An IB administrative assistant is supposed to help manage and organize IB programs for students, but Neil does more than that. She uses her experiences and abilities to create opportunities for students to grow.

"You get all the ropes to enhance student life," Neil said, when describing what it is like to work in Shaker. "It's a job I invented for myself."

Before the COVID-19 quarantine, Neil created another way to support students. She fashioned a kind of classroom in the cafeteria through Language Tables, where she would join students during lunch. Colleges often offer Language Tables, something to help students to better communicate in a specific language.

Neil recognized that sometimes IB Language Classes were not effective enough for students to become fluent. So she took this idea from colleges and brought it to Shaker. Students were able to come and have conversations in just that language. Neil would often bring an article, or talking point for the kids. Sometimes they used the article, and sometimes they wouldn't. Either way, Neil was happy.

The Language Tables did not continue after COVID, due to social distancing. Despite that, Neil still runs her Global Friendship Club. She invites the participating students and teachers to her home for an activity. There they might cook, do art projects, or plan an event. The most recent event was for Valentine's Day; the club made red and white candles in fun shapes which were sold to students.

Neil was very proud of how it turned out. Not only did they sell plenty, but she said that the experience exposed the students to fundraising, which is a practice that isn't as common in countries outside of America.

Her students are not the only ones learning. Neil often relies on the younger generations to keep her ideas in check with new standards. A few years ago, SHHS had a meeting which introduced transgender identities; some teachers were initially confused, including Neil. But by talking with students, and her own children, Neil began to learn.

"My kids keep me on my toes," Neil said.

Ever since there has been a United States, there have been immigrants. America has often been seen as a land of opportunity, hence why so many people have immigrated there. And immigrants, like Myriam Neil, help to make it like this.

Just by coming to a new place, immigrants bring with them at least a little bit of their culture and experiences — gifts that help enrich the lives of the people they meet. Among Neil's gifts are the life-changing experiences and community she creates for students and Shaker Heights High School.

Shaker breeds "collaborative and kind" students, Neil said. "They shine in so many different ways."

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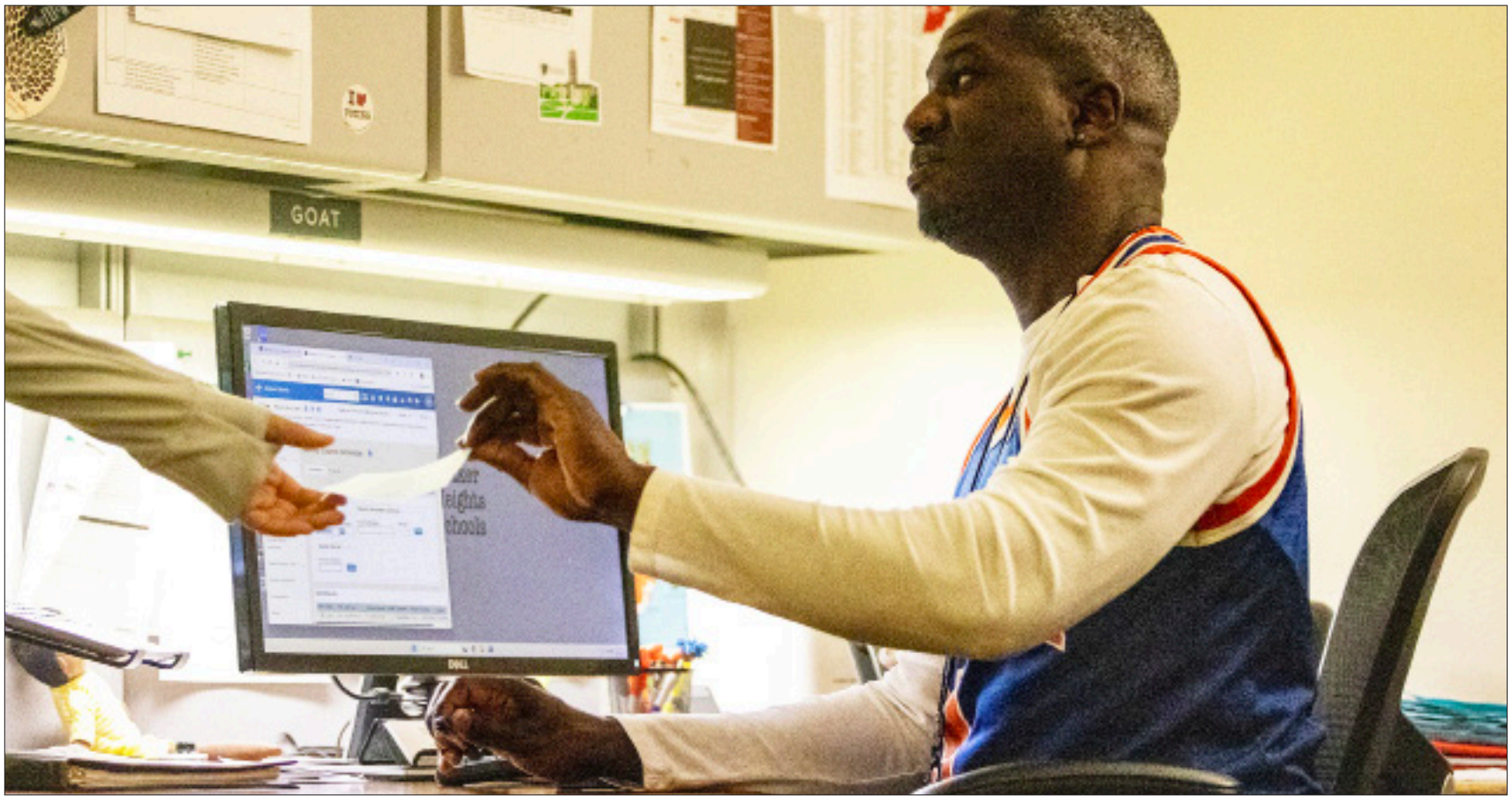
DAVID PEAKE



Guidance counselor David Peake hands paperwork to one of his students in his office. Peake values the relationships he develops while completing such tasks. He said he didn't interact very much with his guidance counselor while in high school, and that his experience affects the way he interacts with his students. He said he wants them to be heard and seen.

Matty Moore

Creating a Wealth of Relationships Through Guidance

Whether connecting some students with the trades, or helping a student found a club, David Peake 's work is relational

AVA MORRIS AND MATTY MOORE
Position

Bring to mind the image of a guidance counselor. You'd probably imagine an adult and one student in a cramped office, looking at a computer screen, planning next year's schedule or completing college applications.

While these tasks are important to guidance counselor David Peake, it's the relationships he creates with students that he values most. He begins most of them in his office at the high school, where he has been a guidance counselor since 2006 and works with 183 students this year.

Since 2006, Peake has worked with thousands of students, helping them get through the day, keeping them accountable for grades, pushing them to meet their potential, finding future paths, and contributing to their growth.

"I enjoy it, and I enjoy the life it has afforded me. The relationships I've made are worth just as much as the money I make," he said. "Being a guidance counselor comes with a lot of aspects. There's no aspect of it I truly would get rid of."

Peake grew up in Columbus and attended Independence High School. He described the school as the complete opposite of SHHS and expressed gratitude for being able to work at a school as diverse as Shaker.

High school guidance counselors are certified, licensed educators who aim to help all students succeed by providing academic, social and emotional support and career planning. Many were teachers before becoming counselors. In most states, including Ohio, guidance counselors must earn a master's degree from a state-approved program and complete a 600-hour internship in a school to become certified.

In the middle of the 20th century, according to the College of William & Mary, the government increased funding for guidance counselors in hopes that they would encourage students to study science after the Soviet Union launched its Sputnik satellite.

So how does a job so focused on impacting students, impact a guidance counselor?

"It's the conversations that stick with you," Peake said. "As I was finishing a conversation with one of the students I have, who previously wasn't doing too well in school, I was leaving and he said, 'Thanks for always believing in me.' And that meant a lot to me. It meant a lot for me to hear him say that because I don't know that kids even know, sometimes, that I believe in them."

Peake said he didn't have an interest in becoming a guidance counselor until he received guidance himself during college. "I was still studying pre-med when I met with someone at the college I was attending, Kent State University. I went to an academic resource center and I met with a gentleman there, and I just explained to him I don't think I'm going to get into medical school. My grades weren't good, and it just wasn't the right fit," he said.

THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR ROLE CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

According to A History of School Counseling, published by the American School Counselor Association, the role began the early 1900s and has evolved significantly since then.

Frank Parsons was a co-founder of the Vocational Guidance movement during the late 1800s. Later, in 1909, he worked on the development of the Boston Vocational Bureau.

One of the first guidance counselors, Jessie B. Davis, was the first to apply for a guidance role in Michigan Public Schools. He became a big part of the formation of the Vocational Guidance Movement.

Then, in the 1920s and the 1930s schools began to see a larger need for guidance counselors. However, due to the Great Depression in the 1930s, funding given to guidance programs was limited. Sometime later in 1936, the George Dean Act was passed, which provided funding to Vocational Guidance programs.

Later, during the 1980s and 1990s, the roles of guidance counselors became a concern. Some people advocated for the counselors while others thought something needed to change. People began to question if it was guidance counseling or school counseling. According to SchoolCounseling.org, some people thought counselors focused more on academic achievement than mental health.

The Kent State counselor asked him one question: Tell me how you like to spend your time, which helped him realize something. “When I was finished explaining all the things I was doing, the gentleman looked at me and said, ‘Have you considered being a school counselor?’ And in that moment, it was like the cartoons — where there’s a light bulb over the character’s head. That’s exactly what it was,” Peake said.

He said that as a high school student, he didn’t feel connected to his guidance counselor. “I didn’t feel cared for by him, and that informs the way I work with students. I want students to feel heard and seen. I also understand better now why I didn’t receive much attention. I was a good kid with good grades, and I know he had to focus most of his time on my peers that weren’t doing well in school.”

Freshman Jaryn Marcus, one of Peake’s assigned students, said she immediately felt comfortable when meeting him. “It was amazing the way talking to him felt so easy before even knowing him,” said Marcus. “I went into the conversation hesitant, not looking to open up. Then, before you knew it, our 20-minute meeting turned into a 40-minute-long conversation. And not everyone can do that.”

Peake’s colleague Sagar Patel, a school psychologist, compares him to a “library bookshelf that has books of all kinds of genres,” he said. “He’s a person that you can have a conversation with on so many levels.”

Peake credits his connection skills to his mother, Janet Peake. “She just has a heart for others. She just is a giving person,” Peake said. “I think that’s one thing I knew about myself even as a teenager. I knew I was a giver and that I had my mother’s heart. And because I’m a giver, I want to make people comfortable and make lives better.”

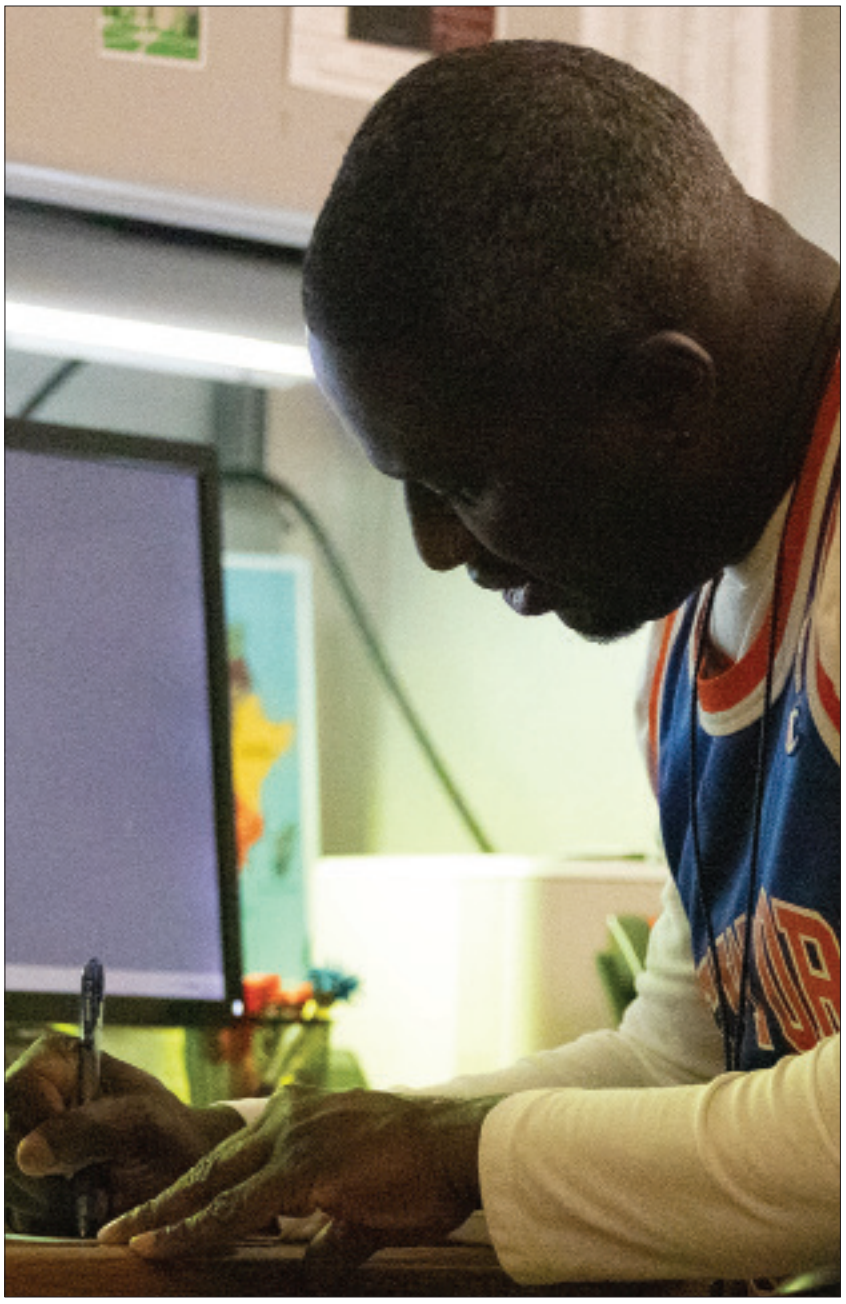
As students move through high school, Peake begins to talk to them about the future. “It helps us to figure out which colleges they should apply to. I want to have more conversations about trades and other careers, however,” he said. “College is great, and I love it, but so are many careers that don’t involve college. I’m always grateful when students come back to visit though. Seeing their growth beyond high school is a blessing to see.”

Joey Moore, a senior, will attend The Ohio State University in the fall. “Mr. Peake has helped me in so many different ways, even outside of school, especially with college applications and finding my path beyond high school,” he said. The connection between Peake and Moore was so strong that the two created a new club for the high school in 2021: Fishing Club.

“Kids get to go fishing this upcoming weekend because of Joey, and his impact will linger for years upon years,” Peake said.

Peake’s connection with math teacher Nevin Jenkins led to a historic day at the high school April 24, when SHHS hosted Trades Day for the first time. The two advise the Architecture, Construction and Engineering mentor program, which aims to acquaint students with those professions. Eighty students from all grades attended the event and heard from professionals in carpentry, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, public works, insulation, manufacturing, precision and career tech.

Peake said his motivation to expand trades day is to let students know what is out there.



In college, Peake realized that his intended major was not the right fit, and he changed his career plan after meeting with a college counselor. “There’s no shame in finding a different path,” he said. *Matty Moore*

> *“‘Have you considered being a school counselor?’ And in that moment, it was like the cartoons — where there’s a light bulb over the character’s head. That’s exactly what it was.”*
>
> David Peake

“So many students just aren’t going to know that there is something perfect for them, and they’ll never know that it’s there. So maybe the perfect thing for you is to work with precision instruments, and you won’t even put your eyes on it,” Peake said.

“I think sometimes we don’t really consider all the great options there are for students,” he said. “We kind of hold college as this ‘better-than’ experience, that this is where the people of means go, but when you look at it, everyone is different.”

Having changed his plan from med school to guidance counseling while in college, Peake is proof that knowing exactly what you want to do for the rest of your life when you’re a teenager is not necessary. “I often say that students have another 75 years to live, give or take, so you don’t need to know what you’re going to do for the next 75 years. If something isn’t a good fit, change — don’t waste time, don’t waste money. There’s no shame in finding a different path; the shame is in knowing that you need to change and not finding the courage to do it.”

Peake said that the opportunity to create relationships as a counselor is a gift, and he does not plan to stop.“I’m not rich. I make decent money,” he said. “But I do feel like I’m wealthy with relationships.”

EVOLUTION OF THE GUIDANCE ROLE

Timeline designed by Matty Moore

1900s — High schools begin to have vocational counselors who focus on helping students find work after graduation.

1920s — School counselors’ focus shifts away from economic concerns to “personal adjustment,” or psychological issues.

1940s — After WWII, the role of guidance counselor expands in schools.

1950s — Federal laws result in increased recruitment and training of guidance counselors.

1960s 1970s — Debate develops about whether guidance counseling should be psychologically or educationally oriented. Guidance counselors begin to work in elementary schools.

1980s 1990s — State governments begin to adopt models for guidance counseling and training or guidance counselors.

2000s — Should guidance counseling focus on academics, careers or mental health?

2020s — Emphasis on evaluation and accountability of guidance counselors and their work increases.

American School Counselor Association

THE SHAKERITE

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NIA MARTIN

Junior Nia Martin, center, said being part of a sisterhood can be hectic. "I think being on a team with a lot of girls comes with a lot of opinions, but I also love cheer because of the sisterhood. You can get into a real heated argument and make-up because it'll just be like getting into a fight with your sister," she said. "It's always over stupid stuff, like if somebody is going the wrong way and we're all having a bad day, but in the end we know the love we have for each other and that we just want the team to be better."

Junior Shapes Sisterhood, Leadership Through Cheer

CHLOE PEEBLES AND VICTORIA SADLER
Journalism II Reporters

> *"I think from us now to us back then, we probably look the best that we ever have looked.*
>
> Nia Martin

Nia Martin proves that cheerleaders are athletes and even stronger sisters.

Martin, a junior cheerleader, suggests that cheerleading can help with finding confidence, but you must rely on your own supply.

To perform well during games, confidence is required to execute the moves precisely.

"You can't get on the court and battle people and not have confidence, and you can't put on a uniform with no confidence because cheerleading is more than just a title," Martin said.

Denise Johnson, head cheer coach, said cheerleaders benefit from the confidence their sport helps them develop.

"The ability to perform even when scared becomes visible as your confidence grows," Johnson said.

"Cheerleading helps with public speaking and it helps, in general, with confidence, and knowing how to speak in front of a large group of people."

The sport has evolved since its earliest forms. According to USA Cheer, the first activities that eventually became cheerleading as it's known today occurred at Ivy League universities in the mid 19th century, and Princeton University students yelled the first words considered to be cheers: Ray, Ray, Ray! Tiger, Tiger, Tiger! Sis, sis, sis! Boom, boom, boom. By the 20th century, a student had led the crowd in a cheer, and the sport went on to take its modern shape.

That evolution continues. According to Martin, cheer styles have changed over time. For example, the stomp n shake style has become popular and replaced earlier styles. Martin has been a part of that change.

Adopting the stomp n shake has made an impact on the team's performance, Martin said. "I think from us now to us back then, we probably look the best that we ever have looked," she said.

Martin's teammate Kamille Lanier said stomp n shake is a predominantly Black style of cheer. "It originated in HBCUs. Traditional cheer is the foundation of the stomp n shake cheer style," she said. "The first thing that we learn as beginner cheerleaders is a set of motions that you will see throughout every cheer team you come across."

Stomp n shake incorporates stepping, which accounts for part of the name, "stomp," and hip-hop dancing, which makes up the other part, "shake." Stomp n shake cheerleaders still perform traditional moves like high V's and low V's, which are motions they make with their arms.

"We do the same cheers from years ago, we just add and change them. It's like the style is different," Martin said.

Lanier the team performs a variety of cheers. "Some of them are more technical while others are more hip," or cool, she said.

What hasn't changed in recent times are popular culture stereotypes about cheerleaders. Films such as the "Bring it On" franchise sexualize cheerleaders. "In movies, they tend to make cheerleaders sluts," Martin said.

Junior cheerleader Antoinette Coleman said that people assume things about the team. "Shaker Heights' cheer team is often given the title of being stuck up, bougie or mean," she said.

By contrast, cheerleading is a rigorous sport. "There is practice, conditioning and camps during summer. Cheer is July through May for the Memorial Day parade, and many hours go toward creating excellence," Johnson said. "During the school year, we do football and basketball season [which includes] practices five or six times a week for two hours, unless you are JV and varsity, which are five or six hours. This is all preparation for games which we have three times a week."

No matter the cheer style, cheerleaders rely on core strength, flexibility, stamina, balance and coordination, which enable them to be agile and powerful while performing.

Martin said she finds comfort in the cheerleading sisterhood. "I love cheer; it is a safe place for me. It's one of my favorite things to do, and it's a really good stress reliever," she said. "Once, I had to take a math test, and I wasn't prepared for it. I had a game that same day, so going to the game took my stress away from the math test. In the end, I got a good grade and we won," she said.

Lanier said Martin is known for making everyone else smile. "I would describe her as someone with a positive attitude and a growth mindset. She takes what she sees and works with it. She is one of the most confident out there," Lanier said. "I would simply say she is the one with the smile, that smile that turns your every cheer into greatness."

JORDAN McCONNELL

In Room 10 during first block May 20, art teacher Jordan McConnell consults with Zoie Durham, a sophomore who is working on a self portrait. McConnell said that a transformative experience in his own high school art education directed him to teaching art in addition to creating it.

Creating a Safe Environment for Creative Expression

ARIANA DAVIS
Journalism II Reporter

Students sit, hunched over customized sketchbooks, pencils scratching against paper, glancing up as Jordan McConnell, their art teacher, moves through Room 10.

Moments like this in Art Exploration class define McConnell's approach to teaching art. To them, art is more than a skill; it's a way for students to find their voice, challenge themselves and see the world differently.

"Finding your own style in art class is tough as is," said McConnell, who joined the high school faculty in 2022. "But this year, it's been really big with our sketchbooks. Everyone decorates them in their own way, and I think that's how a lot of students start figuring out their personal style."

One of McConnell's most rewarding moments as a teacher happens at the start of every school year when they introduce a project designed to challenge students' perceptions of their own abilities. "We always do a really realistic looking drawing. Last year, it was animals. This year, it was plants," McConnell said. "Students always start off thinking they can't do it, and then when they finish, they're like, 'Whoa, I can actually draw!' That's always a cool moment."

He said art builds confidence. "I had this one student who didn't know if he wanted to go into art, and now he's doing this phenomenal portrait," said McConnell. "It's so him, and it's cool to see how he went from no art experience two years ago to creating something so personal and detailed."

"I always start the year with a goofy mindset. That way, when I give criticism, students understand that it's about making the art better, not about them as artists."

Jordan McConnell

Junior Benedetta Strangi took McConnell's Art Exploration class freshman year. "I know nobody ever felt out of place in his class," she said, "and I think that's so important."

McConnell sees the human impulse for creative expression most clearly in their advanced students. "In the upper-level classes, I see seniors creating really in-depth work about their lives," they said. "If they were just to tell me those things, it wouldn't have the same impact. Art lets them express emotions in a way that words sometimes can't."

They create a classroom environment in which students feel safe exploring such personal themes. "I always start the year with a goofy mindset," McConnell said. "That way, when I give criticism, students understand that it's about making the art better, not about them as artists."

While the Art Exploration curriculum focuses on traditional media, McConnell recognizes that the art world is evolving, especially with artificial intelligence. Generative AI learns patterns from images, text or music, and then uses that information to create new content that copies what has been learned. In visual art, AI models trained on thousands of artworks generate new images based on what a user asks them to do.

"I think AI art is really not good right now," McConnell said. "It's constantly stealing other people's work from the internet and spitting out an amalgamation of that stuff. People think AI art is valid, but if it's just stealing, then it's basically plagiarism."

McConnell encourages students to focus on their own creativity rather than relying on AI tools. "You can't replicate human thought and emotion in art," they say. "That's what makes it powerful."

"My big inspiration for art was my brother who is eight years older than me and he was phenomenal at making these paintings and drawing them. So I was looking up to my older brother like, 'Oh, I want to be him one day.' "

Staying active as an artist is just as important to McConnell as teaching.

"I try to make new work all the time so I can display it," they said. "It keeps me connected to the art world and helps me bring fresh ideas into my classroom — hey, guys, let's try this in class," McConnell said.

"I'm not just trying to be an art teacher in your guys' life, "McConnell said.

McConnell originally considered becoming a full-time artist, but a transformative experience at Marlington High School in Alliance, Ohio changed their path."My high school art teacher really pushed me toward teaching after I started tutoring some of the students in our class," they said. "I worked with them for about half a year, and I was able to get them to actually engage with art. That experience was really rewarding, and I realized I could have a bigger impact as an art teacher than if I were just creating my own work."

McConnell's influence extends beyond a single school year.

"Art education isn't just about making something pretty," McConnell said. "It's about storytelling, problem-solving and finding your voice."

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KIA TREIER-JACKSON

Kia Treier-Jackson holds one of her foster puppies, Bart, in her backyard, in the outdoor space she designates for them in October 2023. Her foster puppies spend time outdoors in the summertime when her family is hanging out there. For her, fostering puppies is important because she wants as many dogs as possible to have a chance at adoption. It leaves room in shelters so that more dogs can be in a safe space. Having the dogs at a foster home lets them gain social skills and learn basic behaviors. *Courtesy of Kia Treier-Jackson*

Giving Puppies a Chance at Life, 2 Weeks at a Time

Fostering puppies allows them a better chance at being adopted while also bringing furry friends into families

ABBY LIPMAN AND MARIOS KALLERGIS
Journalism II Reporters

Kia Treier-Jackson is saving the lives of dogs, but probably not in the way you think.

She fosters puppies that have come from an animal shelter or rescue organization. Sometimes, those animals have been found on the streets. The closest animal shelter to Shaker Heights is the Cleveland Animal Protective League.

Treier-Jackson's care gives each dog a chance to regain health and have a better life than before.

People who foster take care of two puppies, typically for about two weeks. This process is a bridge between wherever the dog came from and permanent adoption.

Treier-Jackson, a Shaker Heights resident, has fostered 29 puppies since April 2023. She fosters through Geauga Mama Dogs and Pups, a non-profit organization that focuses on caring for pregnant dogs and puppies under six months old. All dogs rescued by GMDP live in foster homes; the organization does not have a shelter.

Treier-Jackson learned about the organization from one of her friends, who was already fostering. The most puppies she has ever fostered at a time is two; a couple times, she has only had one. Treier-Jackson said that the help she provides the puppies with is very important. "It saves their lives," she said.

WHAT HAPPENS TO PUPPIES WHEN THEY DON'T GET ADOPTED

Whether shelter dogs are fostered or not, they often face one of two outcomes: a lifetime in a shelter or euthanization.

There are two types of shelters, no-kill and non no-kill. At the non no-kill shelters, dogs always have a chance of being adopted. However, if they are not adopted, they will likely be euthanized.

Lack of shelter space and resources, poor health or behavioral issues contribute to the likelihood of euthanization.

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 334,000 dogs were euthanized in 2024. However, these rates are down five percent over the past five years.

At no-kill shelters, if resources are available, a dog could become a lifer and remain there. Some potential adopters see a younger dog and favor it over an older one. Because there is a steady flow of young dogs being brought into the shelter, older dogs are less likely to be adopted.

If the shelter is very populated, there is a chance that dogs may be sent to a different shelter, where their chances of being adopted are higher. Dogs that are fostered but not adopted are returned to the shelter, where they face the same outcomes.

Despite the fact that more than 2 million dogs were adopted in 2024, shelters throughout the country still haven't seen much of a reduction in intakes.

She grew up in Pittsford, New York, and her family owned two dogs. One was a Cocker Spaniel named Sandy, and the other was a Bouvier des Flanders named Smudge. "I don't remember much about them, but they were very sweet and loved going on walks," she said.

Treier-Jackson said she likes to foster puppies because when she was younger, she loved to read books about dogs and training. She said learning about dogs was a good way to learn responsibility.

Treier-Jackson also has a 3-year-old cat named Mochi and a 1-year-old dog named Bean. Bean is her "foster fail," meaning she fostered him and ended up keeping him, rather than seeing him adopted by someone else. She said it is really good for foster puppies to have a resident dog to help them socialize, and it's helpful to see how they respond to a cat.

Along with Bean and Mochi, Kia has two children, Eme and Leio, and a husband, Aaron. While Aaron and the kids aren't so keen on the fostering idea, they help when asked and needed, she said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, fostering increased in the United States. In a 2020 Time Magazine report, the CEO of the Humane Society of the United States said that pet fostering over this period saw a growth of about 90 percent.

During this time of isolation and social distancing, people wanted to help ease depression or anxiety or just add a new furry friend for a short time.

When dogs in shelters are not fostered, they stay in the shelter or are moved to a different one. If the shelter is full, it may have to euthanize dogs that have been there longest to make room for new arrivals. Fostering can become a first step to getting pets to their forever homes, therefore sparing them from being put down.

Becoming a foster isn't as hard as you might think. Having a safe space to keep the puppies during the weeks you have them is the most important part of becoming a foster. You would need to have either your own home, or permission from the owner in order to bring the dogs in.

Transporting the dogs by truck to a shelter is a unique process. "Floor to ceiling, the whole thing full of dogs and puppies," Treier-Jackson said.

Although the dogs she fosters go through an initial health check-up, some still arrive with problems. "Somehow things slip through the cracks," said Treier-Jackson. "Sometimes they still come up with fleas and ticks on them."

Preparing for the dogs is a large part of fostering. Treier-Jackson sets up different parts of her house and yard specifically for the fosters. These areas include everything from pee pads, for the puppies to use the bathroom, to toys for them to play with.

When the puppies are home alone, they have access to a smaller portion of the main area but still have all the necessities. The rescue shelter also provides most of the food, toys and other things like leashes. However, she said, sometimes it's easier to get them on her own.

Fostering does take a lot of time out of Treier-Jackson's day. She often wakes up early, around 6:30 a.m., and goes to sleep late, around 11 p.m. When new puppies arrive, the schedule can change.

Although you can leave the puppies home alone for some time, it's important to be ready for hard work when you return. "You just have to be prepared to clean up the mess when you get home. Like, it's just poop everywhere," Treier-Jackson said.

When she is away from home, she likes to limit her time so that she isn't gone for too long, in case the puppies have an emergency or have other needs.

Sometimes, Treier-Jackson has to address medical problems. Her most recent foster, Manny, had kennel cough, a type of respiratory sickness that is common in dogs. Symptoms include a dry cough, runny nose, sneezing, fever, lethargy and a loss of appetite. If it is not treated, kennel cough can lead to pneumonia, so medication is essential. The money for the medicines needed are provided by the rescue. Money the rescue receives is donated by local citizens and other shelters.

Another Shaker Heights family, the Hrens, have been fostering since August 2022. "My favorite part about fostering puppies is seeing the difference it makes in the mood of everyone in my house," freshman Rachel Hren said. "Both of my parents, my brothers, my dog and any visitors we have to see the puppies are so happy around them."

"When we have puppies in the house, it is hard to be stressed about school or anything going on, because they are just so happy to see you and want to play or snuggle no matter what," Hren said.

Anastasia White, a first-time puppy fosterer this year, enjoyed the new experience. "I like that we're like a doggie Airbnb for a couple of weeks," White said.

For her, being able to foster a puppy is just a way to keep them safe and healthy until they are able to be adopted by a forever family. "My favorite part was just playing with them and being able to snuggle them," she said.

People interested in adopting a puppy through the rescue organization that Treier-Jackson fosters for should first show interest in a dog on the organization's Facebook page, Geauga Mama Dogs & Pups. From there, potential adopters fill out a questionnaire about aspects of their life such as the pets they already have and why they think the puppy is right for them.

Next, the rescue schedules a meet and greet with the potential adopter. If everything seems to be a match and the applicant has a good home environment, a separate application is sent to an adoption committee that reviews it and decides if the adoption will proceed.

Although time consuming, fostering is rewarding. Treier-Jackson said that she has had fun times with her past fosters. She enjoys taking them to softball games, block parties and even Starbucks when she can.

Treier-Jackson said, "It's the best."

Kia Treier-Jackson holds two foster puppies, Nox and Sky, in July 2023 in the driveway of the Treier-Jackson household. Each puppy found adoptive homes soon after their stay with her and her family. *Courtesy of Kia Treier-Jackson.*

> *"It's always a nice thing to do. They're just so sweet and they always like to snuggle and sit on your lap, it's the best.*
>
> Kia Treier-Jackson

By the #s

OHIO PET SHELTERS EDITION

Best Friends Animal Society, a nationally active non-profit organization that hopes to achieve no-kill status for every U.S. shelter, gathered this 2021 Ohio data, which was reported by WKEF Dayton. *Infographic design by Matty Moore*

125,495
dogs and cats
Entered into Ohio animal shelters in 2021

112,904
pets
Number of those 125,495 animals that entered Ohio shelters that were saved

90
percent
Ohio's overall 2021 save rate

53.1
percent
Ohio shelters that achieved a save rate of more than 90 percent in 2021

147
shelters
In Oho in 2021

78
shelters
Of those shelters were considered no-kill

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VAUGHN ULLOM

Senior Vaughn Ullom, at work at Thornton Park this year during a hockey game. Since he was 11 years old, Ullom has wanted to become a professional sports broadcaster. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed that dream by creating demand for streamed high school sports contests with commentary. Ullom will attend Arizona State University in the fall and aims to continue his broadcasting work.

Matty Moore

Senior Voice of the Raiders Heads for Next Audience

Hours of prep preceded every one of more than 300 broadcasts senior Vaughn Ullom has done in pursuit of a childhood dream

REGGIE FITZGORDON AND HENRY NARENS
Sports Writing Reporters

If you walk around Russell H. Rupp Field, you will see banners displaying senior student-athletes' images, names and teams.

One stands out.

Rather than listing a sport, it declares, "The Voice." That title can also be seen on the back of a class of 2025 varsity jacket belonging to Vaughn Ullom.

Most SHHS athletics fans know the name, but it's not because of any athletic success. Ullom is known for his broadcasting skills. He brings old-timey commentary to Raider football, hockey and baseball games. A new listener could easily mistake Ullom for a professional. "I've definitely been told I have an announcer voice," Ullom said.

Commentating has been Ullom's dream since he was 11 years old. He started with a YouTube channel, where he would post videos of himself, talking to the camera about what had happened in sports that day. "This was completely of his own volition," Jeffrey Ullom, Vaughn's father, said. "As a parent I thought, well, you know, I'll certainly support my kid being creative."

When Ullom was young, he and his dad attended Cleveland Browns open practices ,and they'd stay after practice to watch WKYC's Jim Donovan, the Voice of the Browns, film "Browns Training Camp Daily." Later, they'd watch the show to try and see themselves in the background. This was one of Ullom's earliest introductions to broadcasting. Donovan, whose WKYC career spanned nearly 40 years, died last year,

Years after attenidng those practices, Ullom got to meet his hero. "I was lucky to talk to Jim Donovan during his work with Channel 3, though we mainly talked about his radio commentary for the Cleveland Browns," Ullom said. "He's one of my greatest inspirations for my work."

During middle school, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented Ullom from starting his first job — commentating for the Raider baseball team in the spring of 2020. However, the pandemic helped Ullom in the long run. Because of lockdown, parents couldn't attend athletic events, which sparked the need for games to be streamed. Carson Fowler ('21) became the first SHHS student to call a Raider football broadcast.

Ullom's first broadcast was a JV football game during his freshman year of 2021-22. "I was terrified, of course. I mean, I didn't know who was going to be listening," said Ullom, "and from the very get-go, I realized there were a lot of issues in what I was doing." He recalls not taking this game seriously, stuttering often, and taking random pauses mid-game. "I didn't realize that this would be a full commitment that I would work towards in the future," he said. Since then, having commentated on more than 300 broadcasts, the biggest improvement Ullom has noticed is his confidence.

VOICE OF THE BROWNS REMAINS A CLEVELAND ICON

Jim Donovan was a beloved commentator for the Cleveland Browns as well as a big inspiration to Vaughn Ullom.

Born in Boston, Donovan grew up a Boston sports fan and attended Boston University. There, he worked at the university radio station with Howard Stern, who would go on to become a widely syndecated shock jock.

After graduating college in 1978, he found his way to Minnesota, working as sports director for WJON radio in St. Cloud. He arrived in Cleveland in 1985 and began work as a weekend sports anchor at WKYC Channel 3, and became sports director the next year. He held that role for the next 38 years.

He's best known as the voice of the Browns on the Cleveland Browns Radio Network, which he joined in 1999 and worked with until 2023.

Fans loved Donovan. His voice is an iconic element of Cleveland Browns history. Some of Donovan's most well-known calls were William Green's 64-yard touchdown run in 2002 and when the Browns clinched a playoff spot in 2023.

Ullom said he and his dad used to watch Donovan film his "Browns Training Camp Daily" program. Ullom later met him as a high school commentator.

Donovan died in 2024 arfter having fought leukemia since 2000.

Football is Ullom's main focus during the fall season, hockey in the winter and baseball in the spring. He travels for out-of-town games and tournaments with both the hockey and baseball teams. In January, he joined the hockey team on their trip to Bowling Green State University. He also joins various teams for playoff coverage. In 2023, he called a playoff hockey game at FirstEnergy Stadium, where he worked from the same booth where Donovan called the Browns games. This year, he covered both the basketball team's regional games and lacrosse team's district games.

No matter the sport, Ullom spends time studying both teams before every game. "He spends hours and hours and hours — going through the stats and trying to find out who the players are, who their lead players are, what their stats are compared to our players, what their season has been like and wins that are comparable," said his dad, Jeffrey Ullom. "It's an incredible amount of time that he has to dedicate,"

Each sport features a different pace of play, and Ullom calls the games accordingly. Hockey, for example, is almost non-stop action, which requires him to describe all that happens. Football is slower than hockey, with about half of the broadcast being real gameplay, and baseball has a lot less action. In baseball, he has to fill more empty time, which he sees as a better opportunity for him to show off his broadcasting prowess. "He's got to have the ability to know when is the right time to put in this bit of information, when it's time to tell this story over the course of the whole game," Jefferey Ullom said. "That's a completely different challenge and actually one I think he does really well at."

Over the years, Ullom has developed his style by prioritizing "a good balance of excitement and knowledge," which he thinks is a skill most professionals exemplify. He likes how Guardians radio play-by-play commentator Tom Hamilton does this, using interesting and fun bits of information mixed in with positive energy no matter which team is winning.

Some parents have approached coaches, disappointed about Ullom having spoken critically of their kids during a broadcast. He said athletes who are his peers and classmates are comfortable confronting him. "I've had a lot of conversations with players and parents and coaches sometimes, but in the end, no one's really frustrated with me," Ullom said. The way Ullom sees it, his honesty aligns with his professionalism. "I'm trying to be a professional; they're critical, and they'll tell you if it's a poor performance or a great performance, and sometimes for Shaker Heights athletics, it's a poor performance," Ullom said. This year, all three of his primary sports finished with losing records.

During the school year, he dedicates most of his time to preparation and calling games. "Over the summer I listen to a lot more of them, and I try to critique over the offseason because, like, say here for the baseball season, I don't really have a whole lot of time to listen back, then do prep work, then do a game," Ullom said.

In the offseason, Ullom dedicates a lot of time to critique his broadcasts from the previous year. Listening back to his recordings hasn't always been pleasant for him. "It was weird in the beginning when I was getting used to this more my freshman year. I was listening and cringing and whatever. But when I started to realize that this is what I was going to be doing for college and what I hope to be a career, that's when I started pushing that aside and saying, 'This is what I need to do, I need to listen to my stuff, and I need to get better,' " Ullom said.

Vaughn Ullom calls a rivalry game vs. University School druing the 2023-2024 season. When matching his voice to the excitement of a game, Ullom must take care not to lose it, which happened this year when the men's basketball team advanced unexpectedly through the tournament to reach the regional semifinal. *Megan Alban*

> *"I'm trying to be a professional; they're critical, and they'll tell you if it's a poor performance or a great performance, and sometimes, for Shaker Heights athletics, it's a poor performance.*
>
> Vaughn Ullom

Ullom's schedule is tight during the school year. He often calls games on consecutive days. When the basketball team went on an unexpected run to the elite eight after going winless in January, Ullom lost his voice when matching the excitement of the games. "That was rough," Ullom said, "I didn't speak to anyone that whole day. I think I said one word throughout the entirety of the day."

Ullom's voice is also sometimes affected by chronic migraines, and they don't always stop when it's time for him to work. "Actually, the very first varsity football game my freshman year, I started to call it, but I only got through about a quarter," Ullom said. His migraines can interfere with how he speaks, causing him to fumble over his words. "That's probably the most terrifying thing that could happen to me during a game is if I'm getting a migraine, because I just don't know where it can go," Ullom said.

He intends to take a class in college to work on speaking from his diaphragm rather than from his throat. Doing so allows for deeper breaths, easier projection and less strain on vocal cords, which is crucial for professionals who may commentate almost every day.

Most high school athletes don't get to enjoy the privilege of professional-quality commentary. "I think Shaker's blessed to have this asset," hockey and baseball player Braden White said. "It's also crazy that he's in my class because I've been able to have him commentate my games all four years." Ullom has become a household name within Shaker. "It's always fun when he talks about me because, you know, he's Vaughn," White said.

Ullom has studied journalism throughout high school and is a Raider Zone Sports Editor for The Shakerite. He plans to attend Arizona State University next fall to study sports journalism, widely regarded to be one of the best sports journalism programs in the country.

Ullom envisions broadcasting as his main plan for the future. He said, "Whether it be working for a specific team and following them throughout a season, or working for a network and their sports coverage, I would just like to have that set career."

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JOSEPHINE RICH

Drawing the attention of four Hudson Explorers during the Oct. 26 regional championship game at Hawken Upper School, senior Josephine Rich dribbles through traffic. Hoping to continue playing field hockey for a competitive program while also pursuing a mechanical engineering degree, Rich wasn't sure she could maintain her connection to the sport. Research led to Johns Hopkins University, however, and Rich will become a Blue Jay after graduation.

Courtesy of Josephine Rich

Senior Finds Her Next Stop for Field Hockey and STEM

LEILA COHEN AND CLAIRE JOYCE
Sports Writing Reporters

Senior Josephine Rich had to thread the needle when it came to life after high school.

An elite field hockey player, she wanted to continue playing for an accomplished, competitive program, as she has done throughout high school for SHHS.

An excellent student, she wanted to study mechanical engineering.

Rich didn't want to choose one or the other.

"For a long time, I didn't see field hockey as a part of the college equation, mainly because I thought it might limit me," Rich said.

So she researched possibilities. She considered Johns Hopkins University, Middlebury College and Tufts University for their strong Division III field hockey programs and engineering departments.

She said that Middlebury's partnership with Dartmouth University and its Vermont setting were appealing.

But JHU won her over.

"I knew I wanted to do engineering, and Hopkins has one of the most competitive D3 field hockey programs at an engineering school," Rich said. The Hopkins field hockey program is a national title contender.

Rich, who has Korean heritage, said she also appreciates the university's cultural landscape.

"Diversity-wise, I don't really see myself in Shaker as much, whereas Hopkins' student population is mostly made up of Asians, so that's something that I'm excited to experience culturally," she said.

> *"For a long time, I didn't see field hockey as a part of the college equation, mainly because I thought it might limit me.*
>
> Josephine Rich

Just over 2 percent of Shaker students are Asian, while Asian students constitute the largest racial/ethnic group at Hopkins; they comprise 46 percent of the student body.

Rich grew up playing ice hockey, but in sixth grade she switched to field hockey, attending clinics held by Shaker's youth program. She played for the Raiders through middle school and started varsity all four years at SHHS.

Field hockey, like most sports, was initially only played by men. Following the game's introduction to the United States, it grew in popularity among American girls and women in schools, colleges and clubs.

In addition to playing for the Raiders, Rich played for Field Hockey Life Club, which sponsors elite indoor and outdoor teams and conducts training in Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati.

Rich was willing to drive four hours just to practice for two hours every week when she played for Field Hockey Life Club. "We can't regret it if we try," she said. "You'll only regret it if you don't do it. It took so much work, time and just effort in general."

This year, Rich has mentored younger players such as Zoie Garnett, a sophomore who played varsity.

"She helped me format my first email to a college coach, which went really well, and she's also helped me with setting up a YouTube channel for film and editing the videos," Garnett said.

"Jo told us that if any one of us ever gets stuck in a hole, it will be OK, we'll get out of it. Recruitment is just a stressful process," Garnett said.

Josephine Rich advances toward the Hudson goal. She played ice hockey before taking up field hockey in middle school. *Courtesy of Josephine Rich*

Rich handled most of her recruitment process without assistance at a time when student-athletes increasingly hire expensive consultants who promote athletes and advise them.

"I had 100 percent backing from both of my parents. My mom was my rock," she said. Rich researched programs, arranged campus visits, communicated with coaches and evaluated offers.

Her independent approach carries over to her training habits.

Rich said, "I think some of the most peaceful moments are just me, like, you know, dribbling on a field, all by myself."

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EMILY MORTON

Rugby Coach Sends Message That Strength is Beautiful

LAURIELLE JEFFERSON AND DEONNA JACKSON
Journalism II Reporters

Health and physical education teacher Emily Morton has known what she wanted to be since her freshman year of high school. She started playing rugby in her first year of high school and has coached since 2020. She has also played soccer, track, tennis and bowling.

Morton strives to make women's rugby known to students who are hesitant but interested. She believes rugby is for everyone and every body type, not just boys. Her rugby career defies the belief that rugby is a scary sport, proving that skill, strategy, and resilience lead to victory on the field.

This interview has been condensed and edited for publication.

Physical Education teacher Emily Morton braces herself with a rucking pad in anticipation of a hit from Debbie Butler Oct. 8, 2023. Morton started playing rugby as a high school freshman. She coaches the Raider women's rugby team and encourages people to think of rugby as a sport for everyone.

Nia Worley

Rugby is a very physical sport. Do you have to be a certain size to play?
Doesn´t matter about the size. You could be small, but you could be an absolute killer on the outside. Or you could be bigger, and you're good at scoring. I was happy when my own body had a place and it made me feel comfortable for once in my body.

Most athletes have opinions on different sports, usually from their own playing or viewing experiences, but not a lot of people have played rugby. How would you describe a rookie's first game?
Controlled chaos. I mean that in the best way. If you're just watching a game, you notice how hard it is to keep up. But once you get the hang of it, you´ll notice how cool it is. Eventually, you will slowly get the idea of what's going on, but that's probably the hardest part when you aren't paying attention.

What advice would you give to girls who are uncertain about rugby but still want to join?
Get your butt to practice. At least try to give it a try. You're definitely going to be sore, but just the thought of being out there can give you motivation. Even if you don't like it, you can always talk to me and we can do what you gotta do, but don't let fear stop you.

> *"You gotta try new things, and even if you get hurt, as long as it's not anything that's career-ending, you gotta go back out there and try it again.*
>
> Emily Morton

What was on your mind when you got a concussion? And did you ever think of quitting rugby after?
No, but I was at practice and we had to tackle the donut pad, and you try to tackle it as it moves. I did not remotely hit the donut, and ended up face-planting straight to the ground. I don't think that it ever crossed my mind to quit when I got the concussion. I had to take two weeks off and let myself recover, but it's part of life, right? You gotta try new things, and even if you get hurt, as long as it's not anything that's career-ending, you gotta go back out there and try it again.

Do you think that rugby gave you more confidence?
I've been told that people would be scared of me, but I'm a pretty docile person. I'm not very angry or aggressive, but when I started playing, it unlocked that aggressiveness out of me, and that built confidence on the field. I think there's a sense of confidence that comes from aggression, either from adrenaline or out of habit.

What famous player inspires you?
I would say Illona Maher. I know she's like the most popular one out there right now. She talks about being both beautiful, and her brand is beauty and the beast, so it talks about, you know, she's still beautiful, even if she is a very strong woman. And I think that that's like such a strong message, especially for younger audiences.

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MOLLY MILLIGAN

Molly Milligan awaits the pitch during a game this year, her first as a softball player. The last two years, she started in the outfield for the Raider baseball team. Title IX became federal law in 1972, and requires public schools to provide equal opportunities based on sex, so schools must allow girls to try out for a boys' team, regardless of whether an analogous girls' team exists. Courts have found that restricting a girl's choice violates the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause. Girls can thus decide which team best suits their skills. Until this year, Milligan chose to play baseball.

Expanding Athletic Boundaries, One Inning at a Time

Junior Molly Milligan started with baseball and stuck with it until this year, when she joined the Raider softball team

BRIDGET BARRAGATE AND MAIZY MACHMER-WESSELS
Journalism 2 Reporters

From the time she smacked a spongy ball off a tee in the backyard at age 6, junior Molly Milligan has lived baseball.

Her desires sprang from early athletic prowess. "From a young age, I've just been able to have good hand-eye coordination. P.E. was my class in elementary school," Milligan said.

Growing up, Milligan's summers accommodated her baseball schedule since she began playing T-ball through the city's recreation department. She moved up to coach-pitch baseball for a year before joining the Shaker travel baseball team by tryout.

According to the Women's Sports Foundation, having co-ed teams with younger kids is beneficial for building resilience. In young girls, playing with and against boys contributes to preventing an early gender advantage. The Women's Sports Foundation survey found that by age 14, girls are dropping out of sports at twice the rate of boys. Despite this, Milligan persevered.

In addition to playing for the Shaker travel team, Milligan also played for the Golden Spikes, Ohio Tide, Northcoast and the BHM Buckeyes at different times in her early baseball career.

Until high school, Milligan played for a fall baseball league before joining the cross country team freshman year.

"On all those teams, whether it be T-ball or travel, I never played on a team with another girl, so I've always been the only one," Milligan said.

Although Milligan often felt comfortable being the only girl, she occasionally faced challenges. "You just got a bunch of heckling from the dugout," Milligan said. When she was pitching, the opposing team cheered on the boys not to be struck out by a girl, Milligan said.

Milligan showed her athleticism and competitive nature at baseball camps. "If there was another girl, I would get really competitive and would be like, all right, well, I'm going to be the better one," she said.

Her commitment to baseball lasted, even when other girls took up softball, even into high school. She tried out for the varsity baseball team as a freshman, made the cut and was a starting outfielder for her first two years of high school; left field was her favorite. She was the only girl on the team.

When try-outs neared, Milligan said, she felt confident the coaches would be inclusive, and she didn't have any problems. She said varsity head coach Stefan English welcomed her when she joined the team. "They knew who I was," she said. "They knew that I was good enough to play baseball."

Milligan's former teammate, second baseman Ari Feinberg, said she was just another athlete on the team.

"It wasn't weird at all. She was just one of our teammates," said Feinberg. "I think the

BASEBALL, SOFTBALL DIFFERENCES ARE A MATTER OF MEASURE

The Vermillion Independents team in Ohio was the first semi-professional baseball team to have a female player.

In the early 1900s, Alta Weiss joined the men's team as a pitcher at age 17. Weiss attracted fans from the start, with at least 1,200 people showing up to her first game.

While softball and baseball are essentially the same game, key differences shape each sport. Softballs have a circumference of 12 inches to enable contact, while baseballs have one of 9 inches. The basic swing mechanics for softball and baseball batters are essentially the same, however.

Baseball fields have base paths of 90 feet and a distance from home to the centerfield fence of 400 feet or so. In softball, the base path is 60 feet, and distance from home to the fence is about 235 feet.

Softball is a faster-paced game because of the shorter field and only seven innings length rather than baseball's nine innings. While baseball pitches can surpass 100 miles per hour, the fastest NCAA softball pitch was 78.2 miles per hour.

However, fast-pitch softball games featuring skillful pitchers are typically very low scoring; the softball pitcher's rubber is only 43 feet from home plate. Fast-pitch softball offense often relies on small-ball strategies of bunts and aggressive base running.

baseball team is a pretty inclusive space. I don't think there were ever acts of prejudice against Molly."

About 1,300 high school girls played baseball on boys' teams across the United States during the 2023-24 school year, according to a National Federation of State High School Associations survey. Some people argue that women should not be allowed to play with or against men because there are too many physical differences that advantage men. As Milligan continued to play baseball, she said, she resisted suggestions to play softball instead.

"I think people were more supportive of me trying to switch to softball," Milligan said. "A lot of people are like, 'You can play in college if you switch,' but I was really stubborn."

People have told her that she would be one of the best players on a softball field. "I've heard that forever. I mean, from whether it's like somebody helping me choose a bat at Dicks [Sporting Goods] or one of my coaches," Milligan said.

Softball was created in 1887 and, in keeping with cultural norms, men played it. Since World War II, however, softball has been primarily a sport played by girls and women. This year, as a junior, Milligan decided to join them.

"I never considered it up until I got to high school, and I think it's maybe the adjustment to how much competition there really is" in baseball, she said. "And obviously, I played last year, and I started last year, but it was a lot of pressure to make sure I was keeping up with my performance," Milligan said.

This year, Milligan has played wherever her softball coach Victoria Rosen put her, mostly in the outfield and at first base. Milligan moved to the outfield after fracturing her orbital bones when taking a line drive to the eye while playing first base in seventh grade.

The move to softball this year meant Milligan had to adjust to a bigger ball, smaller field, underhanded pitch delivery — and new coaches and teammates. But Milligan appreciates her decision and described it as a "blessing in disguise."

"It's going well, and obviously it's a big adjustment — huge — trying to figure stuff out. But the team environment — I really feel welcomed and appreciated," Milligan said.

Rosen described Milligan's transition to the sport as seamless. "I am beyond thrilled to have Molly join the softball program this year," Rosen said. "The baseball coaches and I have always supported Molly's journey, and this choice was one that I know was very personal for Molly."

Milligan currently leads the softball team's batting average, at .524, with five doubles, two triples and two home runs. She has also contributed 19 RBIs and maintains a fielding percentage of .962 with only two errors the entire season.

With Milligan's help, the Raider softball team had a record of 10-4 as they headed into the final three weeks of the regular season. The Raider's season ended on May 20, falling to the Mayfield Wildcats 25-0. Softball wrapped up with a final game record of 13-8.

"She has grown increasingly comfortable with teammates and coaches, from what I've seen, and the only guarantee I have for Molly is that her future is bright," Rosen said.

Sophomore softball teammate Emilia Chevraux described Milligan as a positive influence for the team. "She's always there to build you back up. I can tell she's one of the leaders. I think the sophomores and freshmen look up to her a lot," Chevraux said.

Molly Milligan, as a toddler, was already swinging a bat in the backyard on a sunny summer day. At age 6, she joined a city T-ball league. After T-ball, when girls moved to softball, she stayed with baseball and played for several travel teams. *Courtesy of Molly Milligan*

> *"She holds herself to a high standard on a daily basis and exemplifies excellence in all she does. We couldn't be happier to have her join the squad this year.*
>
> Victoria Rosen

Rosen said Milligan has quickly established deep and meaningful connections with teammates. "I couldn't ask for a more consistent, calm, hardworking, principled, communicative, respectful member of our softball family," she said. "She holds herself to a high standard on a daily basis and exemplifies excellence in all she does. We couldn't be happier to have her join the squad this year."

Milligan said that when she broke the news of her decision to English, he replied that he was disappointed to lose another A-plus human. English told Milligan he thought she was making the right decision to set herself up for success. However, he told her that she is always welcome back to the baseball team and that her switch does not have to be permanent.

Milligan said that baseball is still on her mind. "Seeing people on the baseball field sometimes makes me think of the fact that that could have been me," she said. "But I am here, and this is me, and this is what I am doing."

Said Milligan, "This is not the end to baseball, just the end of a chapter for me."

Milligan at the plate for the Raider baseball team against Euclid during her sophomore year. *Courtesy of Molly Milligan*

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Journalism II Period 7

JESSICA O'BRIEN

History teacher Jessica O'Brien talks with a student at Breaking the Stigma - A Mental Health Exhibit, staged by Psychology students, in the lower cafeteria during eighth period May 29. O'Brien is recognizable throughout the high school for her powerful voice. "She forces you to pay attention in class. There's no way not to," junior Elise Bucalo said.

Camryn Dozier

Students Can't Miss the Voice of a Teacher Who Cares

HAUWA AMIRA ALKALI
Journalism Ii Reporter

When she speaks, you listen.

Jessica O'Brien, a psychology and history teacher, is known for her big voice and the relationships she forms with her students.

O'Brien has worked at Shaker for 16 years, and is the high school's head representative in the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. She coached high school women's softball for five years and middle school girls' softball for two. O'Brien also coached high school women's rugby for three years.

O'Brien is often called OB by her students, many of whom confide in her and feel safe around her. Junior Vijaya Sadler said that O'Brien offered her comfort after losing a family member.

"When I lost my brother, I felt so many emotions I couldn't even explain. Ms. OB always made sure to check up on me when she noticed I was a little out of it," Sadler said.

She is also known for her loud, projecting voice. "She forces you to pay attention in class. There's no way not to," junior Elise Bucalo said.

O'Brien teaches Kenyon Academic Partnership Black History, a college class offered to high school students by Kenyon College. "I enjoy teaching KAP, not because it's African-American history, but because it helps students get college credits before they get there and helps them better their future," O'Brien said.

O'Brien forms relationships with each of her students. Junior Laila Warner has her for both Psychology and KAP. "I enjoy the classes I chose to take, but my favorite part of the subject is having Ms. OB as a teacher. We often talk about things other than the class, like things that have happened recently in our community," Warner said.

> *"I enjoy the classes I chose to take, but my favorite part is having Ms. OB as a teacher. We often talk about things other than the class, like things that have happened in our community.*
>
> Laila Warner

History teacher Jessica O'Brien observes a student's presentation at Breaking the Stigma - A Mental Health Exhibit. O'Brien's students feel her support in the classroom. "Ms. OB always made sure to check up on me when she noticed I was a little out of it," junior Vijaya Sadler said. *Camryn Dozier*

After the April 1 shooting at the Shaker Heights Main Library, O'Brien took the time to talk to her classes about what happened and how to deal with the emotions students may be feeling.

As head representative of the SHTA, O'Brien receives the complaints and ideas from teachers and takes them to higher-ups, like the principal. "I have bi-weekly meetings with [Principal Isaiah] Wyatt to make sure they're adhering to the contract," O'Brien said.

O'Brien said that moving to Shaker from a different area was an adjustment. "It was definitely a culture shock for me not being from the area, not knowing Shaker," she said.Shaker Heights is the only school district where she has worked. "I long-subbed here at Shaker," O'Brien said. "I substituted for two years before I long-term subbed, and I've been here ever since and haven't worked anywhere else."

O'Brien is also close with her co-workers. "OB was instrumental in supporting my efforts to find more permanent employment in the district, which is something I will never be able to thank her enough for," Psychology teacher Victoria Berndt said.

"She fights for people, and that has followed in our interactions as work colleagues and friends in the 11 school years since."

SPENCER ZBANEK

Senior Borja Lopez and junior Spencer Zbanek celebrate after Lopez scored a first-half penalty kick to put the Raiders up 1-0 over Brunswick at Russell H. Rupp Field Sept. 17, 2024. The Raiders lost, 2-1. Zbanek said his internal motivation to do his best and his loud voice on the field are important to his success.

Michael Better

Using His Voice to Lead the Team and Tell the Stories

EVAN WEISMAN AND KELLEN YOUNG
Sports Writing Reporter

Spencer Zbanek, a junior, is a varsity soccer player and editor of The Shakerite sports section, Raider Zone. This interview has been condensed and edited for publication.

You recently published a thorough game story immediately after the men's basketball team won the regional final game March 7 at the James A. Rhodes Arena in Akron. That's impressive writing. What is the process to complete a story on deadline?

As I'm writing a sentence, I'm trying to see how few words I use to convey the same meaning. You don't want to put in a bunch of jibber jabber. The reader needs to read it quickly. Ms. Sekicky has taught me, when you're reading your own story, start from the bottom and read every sentence word for word. When editing your work, you will have a bias towards how good the material is. So when you start from the end and move up, you're reading each paragraph is its own, and you're not reading it as a full story. So it limits your bias and helps you make smarter edits to make your work as good as possible.

How do you prepare questions to ensure in-depth answers from the interviewee?

It's definitely easier to get examples in person, even with the modern world of technology. It's quicker to get it through texts, but a lot of times, if you have somebody texting you quotes, then they aren't going to be the best. When I'm making my questions, I'll start with the first 10 questions that come to my mind. On those 10 questions, there are ideas that can go together, revise them, cut them down, and from those 10 simple questions, you can easily pull five really in-depth questions that'll get good material. You always need something backing up whatever they are saying in a quote. If I'm interviewing somebody and they tell me words without proving it, I'll ask them for an example of that moment, which makes the quote a lot stronger.

> "Practice makes perfect; the more reps, the better. My first Raider of the Month is not going to be nearly as good as the Raider of the Month I wrote most recently."
>
> Spencer Zbanek

How did you improve as a writer?

I actually didn't take any journalism class my freshman year, so I started last year in the first year of Sports Writing classes, and I was the only Sports Writing student to continue into News Production this year. If it wasn't for Sports Writing, I probably wouldn't be in this class, but I'm so glad for Sports Writing, and I really loved what I've done in this [News Production] class and how I've improved. When I started, I was writing English essays — very wordy, long paragraphs — but that's not journalism. Journalism is different. Once I broke the mold that I was taught in English, I separated the two classes in my head. Practice makes perfect; the more reps, the better. My first Raider of the Month is not going to be nearly as good as the Raider of the Month I wrote most recently. Journalism is a skill, and like all skills, you need to train them. Once you repeat that skill, it'll get better and better. Always take advice from Ms. Sekicky; she knows better than you, no matter what you think.

What drives you to be a successful student inside and outside of class?

I think it's the internal motivation. I strive to be good at everything I do. There's never anything that I want to suck at. That's just how I roll. If I'm doing something, I'm going to do it to the best of my abilities, including school.

What do you enjoy about being a part of SGORR?

I enjoy going to the elementary schools. This year, I went to the middle school. Although, in my opinion, the most fun part is just hanging out with your group of SGORR members every week, talking, having meetings, eating dinner.

How do you think you stand out on the soccer field and team?

The biggest thing I've brought to the soccer field is my voice. Even as a sophomore, when I first started playing serious minutes on varsity, I was always a vocal leader. It's a key thing to just be a leader on the field, no matter what; if your voice is loud, you're going to be noticed. Vocal leadership adds onto the technical skills, which every player should have. The passing, dribbling and touch — those are definitely not lacking for me, either. It's very rare to see a player louder than me on the field.

THE SHAKERITE

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MARINA WASSERMAN

Junior Zahrah Washington confers with Dramatic Literature and Writing teacher Marina Wasserman in her classroom. Wasserman has taught at the high school for seven years. Washington's play,"I'm Sorry, Naomi," was one of seven student-written plays performed for this year's New Stages Festival. Wasserman said she didn't get to experience theater studies as a high school student but was in the drama club and show choir. She coordinates a system of rating New Stages submissions that includes student and English Department readers before choosing the plays that will be included each year.

Camryn Dozier

English Teacher Extends Opportunities for Playwrights

New Stages 'producer' opens the program to students beyond Play Writing class, and the annual festival is growing as a result

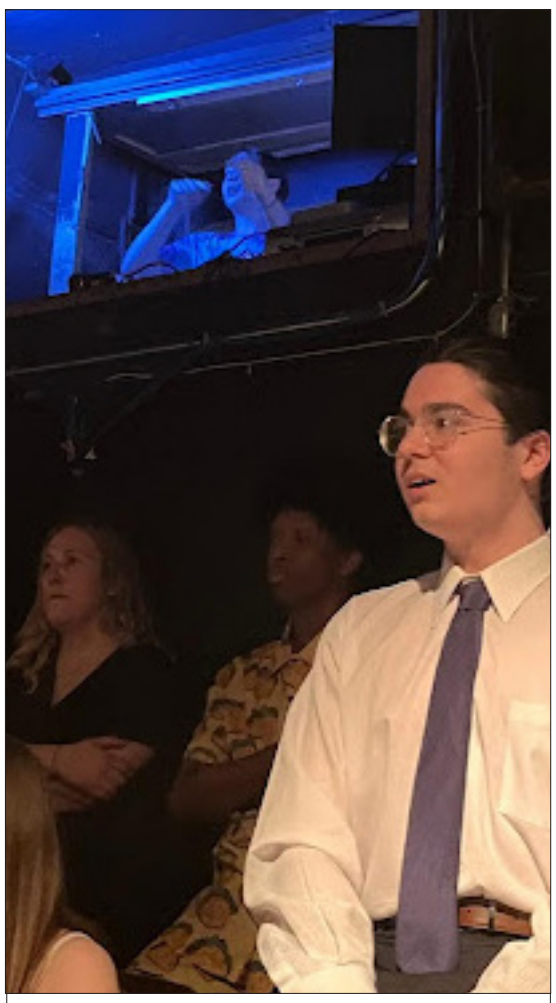
JOHN TEETER
Journalism II Reporter

Marina Wasserman has been a member of the English Department at SHHS for seven years. This year, she teaches 9 Language and Literature and Dramatic Literature and Writing, also known as Play Writing.

In the elective course for sophomores, juniors and seniors, "Students learn the step-by-step process of putting together a script by reading plays and screenplays, and by writing various kinds of scenes themselves. Final projects for the course will be the creation of one-act plays of ten to thirty minutes in length. This class is heavily involved in the annual New Stages Festival," according to the course description.

As Dramatic Literature and Writing teacher, Wasserman conferences with playwrights, gives feedback on drafts, manages the selection process, then oversees and coordinates the annual New Stages production, in which selected short plays or musicals written, directed, acted and staged by students are performed to sold-out audiences in the high school's intimately tiny Black Box Theater.

Because students submitted so many strong plays, they performed seven plays for New Stages 43 this year, one more than the traditional six. Wasserman coordinates repeated readings and rankings of the submissions by students and faculty before choosing those that will be staged.



Marina Wasserman looks on from the back of the Black Box Theater during New Stages 43.

This interview was condensed and edited for publication.

Where did you work before coming to SHHS? Did you teach at another school previously?

A small high school in the middle of farmland, Indiana, and it was called the Franklin County Community School Corporation. I was at Brookeville Middle School and Franklin County High School for two years.

How do the two schools compare? How are Brookeville and Franklin County different from SHHS, other than being in the middle of farmland?

I want to say it was different pretty much because it was 100 percent white, 100 percent Republican, 100 percent Christian. It was completely in the middle of nowhere. The arts were not there. They did their first-ever musical my second year, and so it was very, everyone-goes-to-the-football-games Friday nights.

Where did you grow up? How did that community and your experience in it compared to Shaker and Franklin County, Indiana?

It was really similar in the way of the breadth of classes we have here — so many electives, so many. We were not an IB school, but we had

lots of AP and different things. So I think going to that, and also teaching at a very small school with three English teachers instead of here, there are, like, 20, it was really different. But I think it set me up well.

Were you active in a theater program when you were in high school?

I grew up on the west side of Cleveland and went to Midpark High School. We didn't really have a theater department. Shaker is really unique in that way; we have classes for acting and management and stagecraft and film. The two I teach are Play Writing and Film [as Art]. This whole department is really unheard of.

I was part of the drama club and I did two choirs. And we had an amazing show choir — very "Glee" — but, except instead of going to competitions, we'd go perform at nursing homes. But we loved it. We had so much fun. But yes, I was very much the theatre and choir kid. Those were the teachers that made me want to be a teacher. I had a really amazing experience there.

Growing up, did you always want to be a teacher? When did you realize that this is something that you wanted to do?

Yes, and then I talked myself out of it, and then I talked myself back in. In first grade, my teacher, Mr. Boodheshwar, picked a person in each cluster of desks that would have the red pen and help other kids. And I was that kid; I felt the power of the red pen. Then my eleventh grade English teacher, Kim Baker, made me see how an English teacher can have conversations in their classes and know the kids in this way. So she made me want to be a teacher. I also got to student teach with her, which was really cool. Then I went to college and was like, 'I'm going to do business, I'm gonna make a decision that will be financially good.' And I did a year of that and then realized immediately that that was not for me. So I switched back into teaching my sophomore year, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

How did you become the teacher who runs the New Stages program?

It was always my thing that I wanted to teach English and run the drama club and I said that in my [job] interview. But my first year, the position wasn't open. Then, my second year, the previous theater teacher wasn't going to be coming back, and the Play Writing class kind of feeds into New Stages, so it just kind of worked out.

What is your actual title and role in New Stages? How do you define your role within a student-centered program?

I don't know. It's producer, technically, I guess. Day to day, I have final say on the plays that are chosen. Kids apply to be director, assistant director, production manager — all the things — and I approve. And I let them do a preferencing of directors to assistant directors and then I match them up. But I think, technically, the producer, just honestly kind of like the adult in charge of stopping shenanigans.

English teacher Marina Wasserman addresses the New Stages 43 audience before the opening night performance in the Black Box Theater. *Courtesy of Marina Wasserman* .

> *New Stages is just this weird, crazy, very quick family. I think that's why I'm a teacher. I laugh in my job every day because high schoolers are hilarious and wacky and that's the best part.*
>
> Marina Wasserman

Students have been creating and performing short plays for New Stages for more than 40 years. How do you think New Stages has changed since you've been involved?

I don't know for sure, but from what I've heard from other teachers, I think I opened it up to the whole school. Before it used to be, only the play writing class and if you weren't in the class, you couldn't submit a play. This is what I hear; I don't know for sure. But because so often we have kids who, it doesn't fit in their schedule or they maybe took it as a freshman and now they're a junior, but they really love creative writing, so they want to write something and submit it. And they shouldn't be excluded from that. I also broke the traditional six-play mold. In two of my six years we've done seven plays; this year, and then two or three years ago, we had a musical. One of the kids in Play Writing wrote her play and composed her songs, had the sheet music, and so it was really cool. So I think some of those extra elements of just being OK with change. But I would be curious to see what other teachers think, who have been here longer than me.

How do you think the relationships you develop with students in your 9 Language and Literature classes compare to those you form in New Stages?

In a classroom it's more like, 'Let's talk about life through the lens of this character who's dealing with this thing, and how does that relate to the real world?'

New Stages is just this weird, crazy, very quick family. I think that that's why I'm a teacher. There are teachers who are teachers because they love their content. And I do love to teach the classes that I teach, but at the end of the day, I laugh in my job every day because high schoolers are hilarious and wacky and that's the best part. I think that in class there has to be this level of professionalism, whereas in New Stages, not that it's not a professional thing, but we are together from the start to the finish. This year we had a tie-dye party. We got white shirts with a black font and got together, and everybody tie-dyed their shirt and it was so fun. There's a lot more opportunities for 'Let's just talk about life and hang out' that isn't always there in a classroom. I also like to get freshmen involved so that way we can get four years of that being built.

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Profile Subjects are Interesting People Because of Their Subcultures

Or so says Malcolm Gladwell.

Reporting a profile is really reporting two stories. One is about the profile subject — biography, personality, achievements, failures, opinions, family, work, school. The other is about the profile subject's subculture — the small part of the world that they are immersed in and about which they are experts.

A profile shows readers the profile subject within their subculture, and also educates readers about that subculture. To show students an example of a well-crafted profile that informs readers about its subject and about her subculture, we read and analyze a fantastic 2020 Shakerite profile of Mya Salgonik ('24), "The Slime Sensation of Shaker," reported and written by former Editor in Chief Viv Bowling ('22), and illustrated with fantastic photos by former Photo Editor David Vahey ('21). You can read the full profile at shakerite.com.

After reading and analyzing Bowling's subculture reporting and writing, students begin compiling information they will need to complete the two stories that together comprise a well-reported profile about their chosen subject.

Subculture Example: Slime

Maya Solganik is redefining slime.

Slime is the ooey-gooey clay-like substance that is taking over people's homes and video screens. And more than 886,000 of those screens are tuned into Solganik's Instagram account.

She uses this account to post slime videos and promote her successful business. With more 1,177 posts, Solganik has been running her slime account, @tibbleslimes, since April 27, 2017. Since then, Solganik has sold more than 10,000 units of slime.

"I love how creative I can be. I have made the platform so I can control it however I want," she said. "I can sell at any time I want. It's not like I'm working in a workplace, where, to make money, I have to be there every day and work all the time. So I can self control what I'm doing, and it's all super creative and fun."

Slime is a mix of glue and sodium tetraborate — — a natural chemical compound known as borax and used in cleaning supplies. Therapists commonly recommend that patients use slime as a stress reliever, to squeeze when they get stressed or during sessions. Since 2016, slime has gained recreational popularity and become an Instagram trend. There are more than 13.3 million posts under the tag #slime.

The Oxford Dictionary defines slime as "a moist, soft and slippery substance, typically regarded as repulsive." How has something that has been used to describe worms and unlikeable people become such a sensational trend that has swept across social media?

Green text denotes slime subculture information.

Subculture Example: Slime

"Slime appeals to all the senses," Solganik said. "You can see it, you can touch it, you can smell it. I mean, you could eat it, but I wouldn't recommend it."

(For the record: Elmer's Glue and tetraborate in diluted form can technically be eaten safely in very small quantities, but people should still not attempt to eat slime.)

Slime oozed into American households through the show "You Can't Do That on Television" which first aired on Nickelodeon in 1979. The shows featured sketches in which characters were covered in green goo.

Throughout the '90s and 2000s, contestants in Nickelodeon game shows or winners at award ceremonies would frequently be slimed.

Former Nickelodeon game show host Marc Summers told TechInsider that the slime the shows used was made of vanilla pudding, applesauce, oatmeal and green food dye.

Unlike Nickeledeon's green goo, slime recipes today are more complex. Sodium tetraborate reacts with glue, and the mixture forms an anion, or a negatively-charged compound to which slime artists can add shaving cream, scents, lotions, fake snow, clay, beads and coloring. Solganik and other slime artists call sodium tetraborate the "activator" of slime.

Subculture Example: Slime

Solganik 'Sea Foam' slime, a clear glue fishbowl slime. (David Vahey)

Like Solganik, others have made their own accounts. The Instagram accounts @glitterslimes and @snoopslimes have been active since 2016. They are the two most-followed slime accounts, with about 2 million followers each.

Kim Ruggeri is associate college lecturer in the Cleveland State University marketing department and faculty adviser of the CSU American Marketing Association. She said the success of Solganik and the other Instagram slime entrepreneurs can be explained by "influencer marketing," which enhances connections with customers.

Subculture Facts 1

Research, compile, write, revise and submit at least 300 words that efficiently and clearly communicate facts about your profile subject's subculture. Remember, you need to educate readers about your profile subject AND that person's subculture. This assignment is a subculture assignment and can be completed without interviewing anyone. Look for and concisely write up:

- history
- data/statistics
- definitions/explanations

about your subject's subculture. (If you need help remembering what subculture sentences look like, return to the color-coded version of the Shakerite profile of Maya Solgonik, the slime sensation of Shaker.)

Profile subject name:

Subculture:

300 words of subculture facts (paste links to web sources using the comment function):